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**Title:**  
ALP Broadcast 5KA - The Constitution Bill

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MR. D.A. DUNSTAN M.P., MEMBER FOR NORWOOD.THE CONSTITUTION BILL.

Good evening. This week the Playford Government demonstrated once again that it was prepared to go to any lengths to maintain itself in office against the wishes of the people. The Labor Party introduced a bill into the Parliament to give effect to the principle of "one vote, one value," that everyone in the State should have an equal say in the affairs of the State, and that no one minority section should be able to dictate to the majority.

Under our present constitution over 60% of the electors of South Australia, (those living in the metropolitan area) elect only 13 of the 39 members of the House of Assembly, and 38% of the people, (those living in the country areas) elect 26 of the 39 members. The enormous disparity between the voice of a metropolitan elector in the Parliament and that of a country elector can be seen in the fact that many country electorates have about 4,000 electors to send a member to Parliament, whereas in some city electorates there are between 25,000 and 30,000

2

electors to send one member to Parliament. The member for Port Adelaide (Mr. Stevens) has over 30,000 electors in his electorate and represents himself more voters than do the Premier, the Minister of Lands, the Minister of Works, the Minister of Agriculture and the Speaker of the House combined. The effect of this fantastically undemocratic procedure can be seen from the results of the last State election. In that election Labor polled 55.7% of the votes cast for the two parties, and the Liberal and Country League candidates polled only 42.3%. Although Labor had the highest percentage popular vote polled for any party anywhere in the Commonwealth, nevertheless there are only 14 Labor Members in the House and 21 LCL members.

The Labor Party this week ~~introduced a bill~~ in its bill tried

to remedy this State of affairs fairly. It proposed that an independent electoral commission should be appointed to divide the State up into equal electorates. Because of the difficulty which would give equal electorates with mathematical accuracy of drawing boundaries/the commission would have the right to vary the numbers in electorates by one fifth from the number which with precisely equal electorates would be the quota for each electorate. In addition, because of the difficulty ~~of~~ which M.Ps. would have to face in an electorate larger than those in the northern and western areas of the State, (where population is scattered and and contact with electors takes a great deal of time and travel) ~~and~~ a lower quota for the electorates was to be fixed than for those in the rest of the State. This was proposed on the same basis that we have always advocated - that electorates should be fixed according to convenience and equity. Convenience requires that electorates shall not be so large that it is difficult for for the maintenace of contact between candidates and voters.

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Equity requires that the electorates shall be as nearly equal as possible.

The Government refused to accept Labor's bill and it is easy to see why. Labor's Bill means that the people in the future would be able to have the Government of their choice, and that no party, whatever its political colour, would have an unfair political advantage. Of course that does not suit the Government - without an unfair electoral system the Playford Government would not be occupying the Treasury benches today. However, it is interesting to see just what are the excuses which the Government advances for its refusal to grant the people common justice.

Firstly, the Premier made great play last year with the cry that "one vote, one value" was not a principle accepted anywhere in the world. No-one, said he, accepts this principle - it is just something the opposition has conjured up. It was immediately pointed out to him, however, that Sir Winston Churchill had said in the House of Commons, speaking recently on

the Representation of the People Bill, "In regard to the representation of the House of Commons, there are two principles which have come into general acceptance. The first is "one man one vote" and the second is "one vote one value". " And of course the representation of the House of Commons is now on the lines proposed in Labor's present bill. There the electorates are as nearly equal as possible - the only significant departures from equality being where administrative difficulties in drawing electoral boundaries have occurred or where there are geographical difficulties (as in the Scottish Highlands) making the areas difficult of access. So the Liberals have gone strangely quiet on that argument - all the more as in our neighbouring State of Victoria the Liberals were at the last election defeated by

a combination of Labor and some Liberals who were concerned with getting electoral justice for the people. Their plan, also, was to give approximately equal electorates to the people of Victoria.

Then the Premier has said that it is necessary to have greater representation for country areas than for city areas as the country areas have not as yet all the facilities which the city areas have. It is extraordinary that for nearly ninety years the country areas have had a greater proportionate representation in the House of Assembly than the city areas, and yet the country areas have not been given those facilities which the Premier claims the present voting system will get for them. The present voting scheme has had a fair run - 90 years - why hasn't it worked as the Premier claims it should during that time. Why have we seen, on the contrary, the city area leap from about 20% of the State's population to about 62%? Why is most of our industry, and the facilities which go with it concentrated in and around Adelaide?

Why is it that our rural industries are being denuded of workers who seek better living facilities which the presence of industry can give? Why is it, moreover, that on every attempt by Labor to set up an effective authority to plan decentralisation of industry in the State the Government has voted against it? Why is it that the only decentralisation of industry which has occurred has been to areas which already solidly vote Labor? Because the present voting system prevents decentralisation of industry and the proper development of country areas. The Government dare not arrange the decentralisation of industry and the facilities that go with it to areas which at present return Liberal members in the country - the Government well knows that if it did so it would be taking industrial workers into its rotten boroughs and they would become Labor instead of LCL seats. To protect its majority in Parliament so that it may continue to rule against

the wishes of the people, the Government will not encourage industrial development in rural areas. The present system of voting does precisely the opposite of what the Premier claims for it.

There is an even more discreditable argument used by the LCL. Mr. Shannon, the member for Onkaparinga claims that some people are better than others and that therefore the country people ought to have more vote than the city people. The Premier's grandfather used the same argument when he was in the House of Assembly and said "You find the good-for-nothings, n'er do wells, rogues and vagabonds . . . in the big centres of population and if we are wise in our generation we will not give them the same representation as perhaps the more wealthy and the more intelligent and honourable people who live in the country". Apparently the LCL measures decency, honour, and intelligence, by where a man lives in the State. For the rest - there is no serious argument advanced by the Government members in defence of a system which is indefensible.

But readers of the debates on the electoral reform bills will be horrified at the farrago of falsehood which has emanated from some Government members on this question. It is shameful that our public life should be disfigured by this sort of thing. For instance one member completely misrepresented the contents of the English legislation for distributing seats, (apparently hoping that no one would check up on it.) The same member represented that the Federal House of Representatives seats in this State were fixed unequally when he knew full well that those seats are redistributed after each census of population and must be ~~xxxx~~ then made approximately equal on a quota basis. In order to stress his points he informed the house that the present LCL electorate of Newcastle was 300,000 square miles in area whereas in fact the total area of the State is only 380,070 square miles in area and New castle is not the largest electorate. It is not of course surprising that members of the LCL should resort to <sup>these tactics.</sup> ~~misrepresentation and falsehood~~ ~~over this matter.~~ But it is contemptible. The reason for their doing so is not far to seek. All members of the Government on this <sup>fairly</sup> issue can/say to truth, logic, and principle on this issue "I had not loved thee dear so little, loved I not office more."