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*Revised  
by Helenington*

A.L.P. BROADCAST A.B.C.

3/3/59

DON DUNSTAN M.P.

Good Evening. There can be no problem so vitally affecting the State of South Australia and almost every family in it, as education. It is perhaps trite to say that on the children of today will fall the responsibility for the State's Welfare and advancement tomorrow. It is, nevertheless, perfectly true. Unless our children are well-educated, unless we make adequate provision to see that those who are capable of benefiting from the advantages of education are able to do so, we are not doing the job. We should have enough teachers, enough schools, classes in the schools small enough to allow of individual attention being given to pupils by teachers. We should have a school leaving age which is higher than now, and according to the report of the Murray Commission on Universities, we ought to provide a sounder secondary education in view of the alarming number of failures of students at the University level when they have passed from secondary to tertiary education.

Let us see how the L.C.L. Government in South Australia has met these needs. It has now been in office for twenty five years. <sup>it's too late for off-entertainment</sup> It is of little use now its announcing grandiose schemes for the future development of education if the present education system is startlingly less than adequate. The Government of this State has had more than ample opportunities to plan and provide for the education of South Australia's children. I now propose to analyse the position in South Australia and see how far the Government has planned to cope with the State's needs, and how far it has executed plans. It was well known in the late 1940's that this State's birth rate had been such that we were going to have an increase in school enrolments

of proportions greater than in other States. But at that time the standard of educational facilities in South Australia was not good and we were spending less than the average of Australian States on education. Although an Act passed Parliament in 1946 to raise the school leaving age, ~~to 15~~ it has not been put into effect, and is still not put into effect. The school leaving age in Tasmania is 16 and in New South Wales, 15, but South Australia still has a leaving age of 14. In 1946, there was a ratio of pupils to teachers of 25.8 pupils to 1 teacher - which meant that there were some country classes where there were fewer than 25 pupils to a teacher, and some metropolitan classes of 30 and more to 1 teacher. This ratio in 1946 was recognised as a standard beyond which we must not go, if we were to maintain a minimum standard of adequate education. But, by 1952 the overall ratio had been allowed to rise to 31.1 pupils to one teacher, and it has steadily worsened, until now there are Education Department Secondary Schools where there are as many as 50 pupils and more to one teacher in public examination forms. This, of course, is an impossible situation. No pupil in such a form can receive the individual attention he requires - and every teacher faced with such a load is subject to overstrain and is unable to give of his best.

In answer, the Minister of Education points out the fact that South Australia's increase in school enrolments has been larger proportionately to population than that of any other State. Indeed it has been out of proportion to that of most comparable countries. In the last ten years enrolments in the U.K. increased by 33-1/3rd%, in the U.S.A. by 40%, but in South Australia by 100% overall and by 200% in secondary schools. The increases in enrolments in the last three years alone has averaged 11.9% in Australia as a whole, but was 26.3% in South Australia - more than twice the Australian average.

All this is quite true. But that it was going to happen

was well known for years before it did happen. We have statisticians in this country - several employed by the Government of South Australia. The birth-rate figures were known well before the children who caused the increase in enrolments reached the age to go to school and years before they could enter secondary schools. The Government just did not cope with the problem. In order to maintain the standard of education we had in 1949, the time when spectacular increases in school enrolments commenced, we ought to have spent both before and after that date far more than any other State on education. But the L.C.L. Government did not do so, and is not doing so now.

In fact, the reports of the Commonwealth Grants Commission reveal that this State has consistently spent less per head of population on education than any State except Queensland. Queensland not only has no problem of increased enrolment to compare with ours, but because of <sup>the</sup> religious make up of the population a far larger proportion of their children are in religious schools and do not call on the State education system anyway.

Let's take the last year of the Commonwealth Grants Commission's review and examine how the Playford Government has spent money to meet our education needs. In the year of review the other two smaller States, Western Australia and Tasmania, which are, like ourselves, claimants on the Grants Commission for disabilities grants from the Commonwealth and £12.8 per head of population respectively on education. spent £11.6 per head of population/ We, although our education problem was far greater than theirs, spent £9.6 per head of population. It is true that in his 1957 report the Minister of Education remarked with pride that "every year since 1946-7 the Education Department's expenditure per head of man population in South Australia has been nearer to the average figure for all Australia than that of any other State, and the same is true (for seven of the nine years) for total expenditure on education." What an

achievement? Although we had a greater problem to meet we spent closest to the average - that means in plain words that in relation to our education needs, we have spent far less than average - and our children have suffered.

Let's take the figures for expenditure per child enrolled in the last year of review by the Grants Commission. In that year Western Australia spent £79/-/- per child enrolled; Tasmania £70/-/- per child enrolled, the Australian average was £70 per child enrolled, but South Australia, which needed to spend more than any other State spent only £62 per child enrolled.

The Minister of Education claims, however, that recently the Government has been spending more on education. Apparently he would have us believe that a genuine attempt is being made to close the stable door, even though the horse has already bolted. An examination of last year's comparative figures shows that even that is not the case.

It is true that in 1958 the expenditure from loan monies in South Australia on school buildings was £17.1 per child enrolled as against the Australian average of £12.3 per child enrolled. This is inadequate when we consider that our increase in enrolments, which after all, determines building needs, was more than twice the Australian average. But, if that were the only figure concerned it would seem that some, though faltering step, was belatedly being made. But against that figure let us set the remainder of moneys spent on education. I have taken the comparative figures of total consolidated revenue by States, and in order to get a comparable figure have excluded (because of the differences in methods of budgeting by States) the expenditure and receipts for public transport, other than the net deficit of public transport in each State. The

result shows that while on average the Australian States spent 23.4% of consolidated revenue on education, South Australia only spent 16.7% of consolidated revenue on education - the lowest in the Commonwealth.

So it is with some suspicion that we should view the Playford Government's promises at this late stage to spend £86,000,000 on education. Why leave it till now - when our Schools are hopelessly overcrowded - ~~children~~ are in some districts turned away from high schools although they are properly high-school students and sent to technical ~~schools which haven't enough accommodation for them anyway.~~ Why leave it till now, when the teacher shortage is desperate and the senior teachers are being taken from primary schools to battle with the overloading in secondary schools and the primary schools deprived of experienced teachers whom they cannot afford to lose. Why leave it till now, when our educational standards have been allowed to fall so disastrously below the levels of 1946 - which were inadequate anyway.

Perhaps it would be fair to see whether the Government has carried out the program the Premier promised in his last policy speech - as the Government seems to claim that it has awoken from its slumbers in the last three years. In 1956 the Premier promised that he would immediately build 30 new primary schools and 16 new secondary schools. He hasn't. That promise was not fulfilled. How then, in view of a past performance so woeful, can we place any reliance on his promises for the future?

Let us turn to the question of provision of teachers. The report of the Minister of Education shows that nearly one third of the teachers in the education department are unclassified - i.e. have not the requisite qualifications for classification. Of 4,769 teachers listed in the last report, 1,660 ~~had~~ had salaries of less than £800 - no other State in the Commonwealth has such a high proportion of

of teachers in the lowest income brackets of its salary scale.

For some time the Education Department recruited teachers for a pressure-cooker course of six weeks observation training. These teachers have been used in Schools despite the fact that, of course, they wanted more training and undoubtedly needed it. A large number of the teachers now unclassified in the schools and a large proportion of those now in training have done or are doing only a 1 year short term course before being sent ~~to~~ teaching. This course deprives them of classification and its salary advantages, and in addition does not give them the courses the department itself has set as the minimum classification for teachers. No other State in the Commonwealth has in its Education Department so large a proportion of teachers who, through no fault of their own, but because of Government policy, have inadequate training.

~~Why is it that Government can get away with a record like this in education?~~

Only the Labor Party is determined to remedy this situation - because only Labor represents a majority of the people and their needs. We propose an extensive school building program added allowances to teacher-trainees adequate accommodation for country teachers, completely free education up to and including University, and the provision of all school books free to students in all schools, with a refund of this year's charges for school books.

~~For your children's sake, Vote Labor on March 7th.~~