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**Title:**  
Radio broadcast - Petrol Stations

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Good Evening. I am going to interrupt my talks on health and hospitals this evening to deal with a topic which is drawing a great deal of public interest at the moment - and with some cause.

The average person in Adelaide cannot get about much at all without noticing the extraordinary mushroom-like growth of petrol stations in the city and suburbs. The increase in number of these is quite out of proportion to the growth of other types of businesses they are springing up on almost every corner. What is it all about? What is going to be the result? Who is going to pay in the long run?

Let's go back to the beginning of this business. A few years ago now, the oil companies, that is the oil wholesalers, started to set up one brand petrol stations. They sought and bit by bit succeeded in getting the service station owners, that is, the petrol resellers, signed up on these one brand agreements. Once a man was signed on a one brand agreement that did not protect him, however. Not only did other oil companies build company-owned stations selling their brand of petrol in the immediate vicinity but in a number of instances, the very company to which a man was tied on a one brand agreement built its own station selling the same brand close by. Next time you pass the corner of Unley Road and Cross Road just look at the stations on diagonally opposite corners of the intersection. One is a privately owned and the other an oil-company owned station each selling the identical brand of petrol. Ah but, you might say, if a company did that to a service station owner, why didn't he go elsewhere and get petrol from some other Company. He could try to go elsewhere, but he wouldn't get other petrol, because the oil companies have an agreement among themselves to see that <sup>on</sup> no one who is/a one brand agreement can leave it and get any other brand.

We might all ask - "What's this all for - surely all these stations can't pay?" Of course they can't. People/<sup>who</sup>go into the company built stations have a very tough tough to make ends meet and it is no wonder that so many of them have found it broke them.

The small business man who owns his own service station is having his business cut and his returns fall.

The reason for it all was made clear by the managing director of Shell at the outset of the campaign. One brand petrol stations won't mean more service stations - he said - they'll mean less.

The whole campaign is to allow the oil companies, the wholesalers, to get complete and direct control of retail business of petrol reselling in Australia. To do this, they are providing their own outlets and steadily and relentlessly squeezing the small business man, owning his own business, out of petrol reselling altogether. Then the companies will have the public completely by the short hair, and may exert all the extortion upon the public which this effective control will allow - and that's a great deal. The recent attempt to raise price of petrol in New South Wales is one example of the course they intend to pursue.

The whole matter came to a head in this State in 1954. At that time the oil wholesalers were going in for wholesale destruction of good standard homes to make way for service stations in numbers far beyond the public's need for service.

At that time I introduced into the House of Assembly a bill designed to cope with the situation. It was called the Motor Spirits Distribution Bill and was modelled on an Act recently passed in New Zealand by the National (i.e. anti-Labor) Government though with the support of the Labor party there.

The Bill provided that an independent commission should be set up with power to license service stations. No service station could after a certain date continue to operate without a license and the commission was to have regard, in granting licenses, to the maintenance of fair competition, to ensuring that the petrol of all wholesalers was available in the area, to providing a reasonable return in the business licensed and to the nature of the site and the maintenance of good working conditions. But the licensing commission was not to grant or renew a licence if an oil wholesaler had ~~any~~ any direct or indirect interest in it.

This proposal would have ensured fair trade practices and

protected the community, It would have ensured that small and family businesses could continue to exist, stopped the oil companies from extending their control, ensured fair competition and stopped the building of unnecessary petrol stations.

But the influence of the oil companies in the L.C.L. and particularly on the Premier was made evident during the course of the debate. Previously when questioned about the matter the Premier said in the House:-

"The Government is just as much concerned as honourable members and the public about this mad policy of building large numbers of petrol stations in excess of public demand and at a great waste of materials and manpower at a time when these could be used for housing and other matters."

In reply to my introduction of this bill he said it was unnecessary because he had an undertaking from the oil companies that they would not increase the number of stations in the metropolitan area for two years and that no premises not in operation at the time of the undertaking would be started in the metropolitan area in that time. That statement was not correct. The undertaking by the oil companies was not in those terms and in fact the number of stations was increased in the metropolitan area in that period and the Premier did nothing whatever about it. Moreover, since the oil companies have very powerful business and political connections, the Premier forgot the concern he originally expressed in the House and has allowed the cartelisation of the industry to proceed, have done nothing to stop small business men from being ruined, or to stop the mad waste of houses, men and materials he originally so roundly condemned.

When it was pointed out that my bill would not stifle but maintain competition, he would have none of it. It was interference with business, he said. It became quite apparent that the motto of the Premier and his followers concerning business was "Each for himself and God for us All" as the elephant said when he danced among the chickens. The L.C.L. is always on the side of the elephant while the Labor Party has a real concern for the chickens.

The bill was defeated and today we have the fantastic prospect that houses remain in dire and short supply - I have families in

my district paying £4 and £5 per week out of a small wage for houses so hovell-like that they constantly fall through the ant and worn eaten floors, while not a stone's throw away at the corner of George Street and the Parade an oil company had demolished not only a row of shops, but five solid houses in good condition to make way for one service station in a district already overcrowded with them.

The demands of the public, the demands of reason and fair play, the prevention of monopolies, the protection of the small and family business - all others are ignored by the minority L.C.L. Government of South Australia, when big business talks, and that's why houses will go on being unnecessarily demolished when the need are homeless. Mannon must be served.