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Title:

Handwritten radio script regarding 'brochure published by the ... Liberal Party which alleges that the average Australian now is much better off than before and diagrammatically shows how much more is paid in wages now than in the time of the Chifley Government.'

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Good evening

In the past few weeks some of you may have seen an attractively printed brochure published by the Federal Secretariat of the Liberal Party, which alleges that the average Australian now is much better off than before & diagrammatically shows how much more is paid in wages now than at the time of the Chieffy Govt. Pamphlets like this are remarkable for what they don't say - since the £. today will buy about what 7/- would buy in 1948 it's hardly surprising that wages are higher in money value than in 1948 - and it's not very honest to paint a picture ignoring the fact that contrary to Mr. Menzies' promises value has flowed out of the pound under his administration. But let me just contrast for you the position of the wage-earner in 1948 needing hospital treatment.

He could then go to the public wards of public hospitals in this State & get treated without charge. If he had insured himself with a medical benefit insurance scheme he could use that money on his personal needs in time of illness - and that was just, because it's an old saying but a true one that in time of illness you don't need less money than when you were well - you need more.

He could have these advantages because the Chieffy Govt. had asked the State Govts. how much they were receiving per patient per day formerly in public hospitals. They then paid that amount, plus a further amount to assist with hospitals expansion, to the States on condition they gave free treatment.

Now let's see what happened under Liberal Govts. When the Menzies Govt. took office in Canberra they lifted economic controls & that was an

immediate & disastrous inflation. ~~The~~ The money paid by Labor Govts. would not then meet the real costs in hospitals for which the payments had been designed. So the Menzies Govt. said to the State Govts. - we will increase the amount paid by the Commonwealth to allow for the decrease in the value of money - but only provided you make a charge in public hospitals. So it forced most State Govts. into the position that they had to charge patients in public hospitals.

In S. A. however, it was not necessary to reimpose ^{public} hospital charges. As ~~the~~ ^{the Plyford Govt} provided fewer hospital facilities than ~~to~~ any other State, & spends less on health & hospitals than any other State, we had a favourable adjustment available to us from the Ames Commission which would more than cover amounts to be received from charges for public hospital treatment. But rather than spend the money I called the favourable adjustment, Sir Thomas Plyford reimposed charges in public hospitals to take hundreds of thousands out of the pockets of the poor people of S. A. It was apparent from the action of the Menzies Govt. that the Liberal party does not believe in free public hospitals - & Sir Thomas was simply following his party's policy.

But then he went a step further. This year charges were introduced in the charges which are more severe than any known before. Let me give you an example.

At the time the new charges were introduced the Premier said that there was an administrative discretion to reduce the charges in cases of hardship. However, the formula upon which that discretion was

To be based was never shown to the House of Assembly. The Labor Party demanded that at the very least we should be able to scrutinise it - but the Premier refused, & in view of what has happened since that is not surprising. It was suggested that if a pensioner insured himself ^{at a cost of} 9' per week with a medical benefit society, the monies from that society & the Commonwealth Govt. would be taken in full satisfaction of the bill for treatment in the public hospitals. The Premier said that would usually be the case. Liberal party members waxed eloquent on the subject. Mr. Mitchell, the member for Mitchell suggested that a payment of 9' per week was no hardship to a pensioner. (I may say the reaction ^{to that statement} of some pensioners who are paying over £2/6 per week for a room and bed to feed & clothe themselves & provide for all other necessities out of the remainder of their pension was not one of grateful accord.) Mrs. Steel, the member for Burnside, said that she felt that S. A. pensioners were a self-reliant lot, & would prefer paying 9' per week to the situation in W. A., where the Govt. uses Collyer's money towards hospital costs.

But you see the only case in which a pensioner really covers himself by paying 9' a week is if his income is nothing more than the pension & he has no assets. If he has worked a little & earned income within the amount allowed by the Federal means test - his hospital bill is increased. If he or his wife have put a small amount away in the bank to provide themselves with a decent burial - his hospital bill is increased. If he has a motor-car - why heaven knows according to the State Govt. he is a phlegma-

his hospital bill is increased. In each of these cases the subscription to a medical benefit society of 9' per week will not cover his hospital bill. And if he, foolish fellow, had been so gullible as to believe the previous statements of Federal & State Liberal leaders that pensions would be covered free & then had gone into hospital in the last few weeks, & not insured - why he will have a nice little packet to pay.

And what of the wage-earner. He must insure for more than 9' per week to cover himself. To get anything like full coverage he must pay, if he has a family, a tidy little sum. Most wage-earners find this hard to meet. Let them console themselves. Under Labor free hospitals were paid for by a graduated tax, so that the wealthy helped the poor & everyone in need was certain of assistance. But the great benefit which the wage-earner now has received from the ~~Federal~~ ~~Liberal~~ ~~Govt~~ is that the more wealthy people on an appointment early to meet ^{longer} ^{subscriptions} to a medical benefit society, & they ^{thrift} get ^{it} ^{back} ^{from} ^{it} ^{at} ^{time} ^{of} ^{illness}. To get ^{available} Federal Govt ^{subsidy} in time of illness a man must belong to a medical benefit society, but the amount you get from the society depends upon your rate of subscription. So the ordinary wage earner instead of paying a graduated tax - (small on the poor man & heavier on the more wealthy) ^{for} and getting in return ~~a~~ ~~free~~ ~~hospital~~ ~~treatment~~ - now pays a graduated tax, must in addition pay a subscription to a medical benefit society, & gets a hospital bill which is likely to be

in excess of the amount of medical insurance
for which he has been able to subscribe.

Now this means that number of people who
are ill are now not undergoing needed treatment
because they have not incurred an expense for
that treatment they so they will be unable
to meet.

Most comparable Western countries have now
provided comprehensive medical & hospital
treatment schemes to remove the fear of debt
from times of illness. Many countries far less
prosperous than ~~our~~ our own have done so.

But from a position where we were in
vanguard of establishing adequate social
services under Labour we have progressed
backwards at a remarkable rate to as far
in the rear. But what does it matter?

After all we can console ourselves that our
Prime Minister is telling the world ~~that~~ his
vision of progress is obvious that this
is Australia Unlimited.