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**Title:**

ALP broadcast regarding 'the feasibility or desirability of a country University in South Australia'.

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A.L.P. BROADCAST 27th June, 1960.

Good Evening,

As numbers of statements have recently been made in the press about the feasibility or desirability of a country University in South Australia, it would be as well to get a few facts clear.

What advantages and what disadvantages does such a scheme have.

Let's look at the advantages. South Australia under its present lease the country league government, has developed an alarming tendency to centralisation of population in the Adelaide suburbs. This has meant soaring land values, increased cost of housing and service facilities (such as water, sewers, roads and fuel) and the break-up of country communities with their close bonds of human relationship. Adelaide suburbs do not have the same community life or spirit which can be found in country communities - in most built-up suburbs in Adelaide community activities - social, political, sporting, or in the arts, - do not touch more than 25% of the populace at the level of personal contact. The result to the community in increase in nervous disorders and mental disease, in delinquency and family break-ups has been shown so clearly in other States and countries to need no emphasis here.

Clearly a planned decentralisation of the community so that larger country centres providing facilities and variety of employment would be to South Australia's benefit. Now it has been said that the first thing you must do is to de-centralise industry first - and the rest will follow. That, of course, is nonsense. Any decentralisation of facilities is of assistance in a general policy of ~~the~~ de-centralisation - a country University is likely to encourage other measures in decentralisation to follow just as a decentralised industry will. It would be different if a country University were

put in a completely isolated spot unlikely to develop otherwise -

but this is a suggestion no-one has seriously made.

A second factor which some people say is a disadvantage is really an advantage. It is true that no country area of South Australia today has a sufficient school population taking matriculation examines to come anywhere near providing the basic necessary student population for a University. So a country University would have to be largely residential.

Frankly, that is an advantage. It has been proved time and again that there are considerable advantages in having a residential University. In the University of Adelaide, there has been a continuing effort to provide residential colleges for students, who living a corporate academic life and subject to disciplines in their studies, find an incentive to study greater than is found by the average student who does not live in a college. Residential Universities are in other countries far more the rule than the exception.

It is alleged that the cost would be greater as residential students would have to be subsidised. It is true that the cost would be greater, but not, I believe so much greater as to outweigh the advantages of a residential institution. Of course, a new University institution will cost about three times per head what Adelaide University costs. But this is so whether it is in the country or in the city. Smaller university institutions, and new ones, always cost considerably more than existing institutions.

But here we come to another considerable advantage. If we were to establish another University in a wealthy country district, it would be likely not only that we would have help from the Universities Commission which would be forthcoming for any worth-while project - it would be also likely that a great deal of money towards the cost of buildings, endowments and library could be raised from local people interested in the development of their own area. It has already been proved elsewhere that this was the case. It would be unlikely to be

the case in Adelaide - already charitable appeals in the metropolitan area are so many and so constant that the possibility of raising comparable sums in Adelaide for a new metropolitan University would be remote - and the State Government will be hard put to it to meet the whole cost involved.

Now it is said that a country University would have difficulty in attracting staff. There are various reasons given for this - but the most usual is that country towns are lacking in "culture". If this means that country towns don't get so many symphony concerts, plays and art exhibitions the answer is that in fact they do get some and with the development of a country University any town in which it was established would be certain to get more. It is evident that many of the people who make this criticism just don't know what goes on in some country towns. In fact, life in a University country town is likely to have considerable attractions - provided there is adequate local provision for the education of children and that living quarters are made attractive.

The finger is pointed at Australia's <sup>one</sup>/decentralised University the University of New England at Armidale - and it is said that it has difficulties in providing staff. That University has a number of outstanding scholars and teachers at the professional level, but has some difficulty in getting adequate staff at the level of senior lectureships. But this is so with all small Universities. The problem of New England is no greater in this regard than the problems of the University of Tasmania and the same problem will face any second University institution in South Australia, ~~which~~ whether it be in Adelaide or in the country.

The picture of Adelaide suburbia as a haven of culture and the arts as compared with which country towns are dreary wastes, is one which can only raise hoots of derisive mirth.

Indeed, the experience of New England University should tell us something here. When the teachers' college was established at Armidale the then Minister of Education was faced with numbers of tearful parents begging him not to make their

children who were student teachers go to "Woop - Woop" as they called it. His reply was that they must go there for a time, but then could make application to come back to Sydney if they wanted to. Out of hundreds, only two ever did.

What is more, while students at New England University College were taking Sydney University exams their proportion of academic success was far greater than that of students at Sydney University itself.

Critics of the idea of a country University are reproducing the same facile objections which were raised when the Armidale project began - but that project has been a signal success - and we can do the same here.

Good Night