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Title:

ALP broadcast regarding remarks by Baden Pattinson, Minister of Education,
'concerning myself in particular and other members of the Labor Party and some
University staff members in general'.

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FILE

A.L.P. BROADCAST

25/7/60

3477

Good evening.

On Friday last the Hon. Baden Pattinson^N, Minister of Education, passed some remarks concerning myself in particular and other members of the Labour Party and some University staff members in general.

These remarks were widely publicized by the morning newspaper, which of course gave me no right to reply to them, so I think it proper I should say something about them tonight.

Mr. Pattinson said that there was a preconceived plan in which I was ringleader, to undermine confidence in South Australia, and to smear the reputation of the Premier, and that in Parliament, over the air, and in the press, I had pursued this plan by the loose use of rhetoric and invective.

It is only fair to Mr. Pattinson that such charges should be examined. If they were true I should have been guilty of gross dereliction from my public duty. For I hold it morally ^{probable} responsible for a man in public life to use mere personal abuse of another or to do other than attack his opponents on a political issue by citing his evidence. The significant fact about Mr. Pattinson's charges against me and other unnamed persons is that he quoted not a word of ^a my speech, radio talk, or press statement I have ^{or they} ever made. To me it seems quite clear why.

It is quite true that I have on many occasions bitterly attacked the Premier and his government on many issues. I have never attacked without citing the evidence on which I based what I had to say. Let me reiterate some of the charges I have made.

I have attacked the Government on education. I have said that although, on Mr. Pattinson's own reports, this State has had an increase in school enrolments which was more than twice the Australian average, nevertheless the Playford Government has consistently spent less per head of population on education than any other State except Queensland, (whose education problems are not nearly ours). I have said that in consequence

this State has a higher proportion of inadequately qualified teachers in its schools than any other State in the Commonwealth; that the recommendations of the education enquiry in the 1940s have been ignored, that our children are being taught in many instances in classes so crowded that it is impossible for them to receive adequate training. I have said all of this - and it is true. The Commonwealth Grants Commission shows these figures for spending per head of population on education in its last report:

N.S.W.	Vic.	Qld.	W.A.	Tas.	Av.	S.A.
10/19/4.	10/11/7.	8/12/5	12/12/6	12/16/-	10/12/11	10/6/8

In order to give a comparable service with the other States S.A. should be spending more than any other State, but it spent less than any except Queensland, less than the Australian average, and far less than the other claimant States.

I have attacked the Playford Government on hospitals. Consistently since the war this State has spent far less on public and subsidised hospitals per head of population than any other State. The Grants Commission's last figures for spending per head were:-

N.S.W.	Vic.	Qld.	W.A.	Tas.	Av.	S.A.
6/12/11	7/3/1	8/6/4	8/6/7	8/3/9	7/3/5	6/5/1

I have said that as a result the proportion of public and subsidised hospital beds in S.A. is the worst in the Commonwealth. The figures are for persons to each public or subsidised hospital bed:

N.S.W.	Vic.	Qld.	W.A.	Tas.	Av.	S.A.
171	221	126	159	141	174	232

And the same position obtains for trained nursing staff.

For every trained nurse:-

N.S.W.	Vic.	Qld.	W.A.	Tas.	Av.	S.A.
302	316	347	251	270	304	401

Moreover, despite the fact we have less hospital provision than other States and spend less per head on it, the charges in our public hospitals by this Government's direction are the highest in Australia.

I have said that - and it is true.

I have said that the Playford Government's provision for public relief and child welfare is the most mean and niggardly in Australia, and that the Government's policy of demanding repayments of sums given out to needy families in public relief, and its reduction of public relief so that recipients get no benefit from increases in Commonwealth pensions has caused great misery. And on the figures from the Grants Commission for spending by States per head of population on this score:-

N.S.W.	Vic.	Qld.	W.A.	Tas.	Av.	S.A.
17/8	19/5	16/1	1/-/10	1/3/11	16/10	13/8

I have said all this and it is true.

I have said that the Government of South Australia is a dictatorship, that it is maintained in office by a rigged electoral system which gives nearly 4 times the say in the future of the State to sparsely populated rural areas that is given to people living in the metropolitan areas, I have cited the election figures to show that the Labour Party regularly polls a majority of votes in this State but is denied the office which the majority of people wish it to assume. I have cited not merely Labor statements on this issue, but a pamphlet written by young Liberals in which they condemned the electoral system as morally wrong, and the Premier as a dictator, more and more out of touch with the people.

I have said those things, and they are true.

I have said that the Premier of this State has, with his colleagues tried to mislead the public of South Australia by the oft-repeated statement that South Australia, under his administration, has developed industrially far more than any other State. That oft-repeated claim is not true, and in fact

since 1938 when Sir Thomas Playford took office four States, S.A., N.S.W., Vic., & Tas. have all increased their value of factory output per head of population six times to the nearest whole number, and in fact Tasmania's increase is on the figures a bit better than ours. Here are the figures:

S.A.	1938	figures	<i>card figures</i>
	£23.01		£150/8/10
Tas.	1936 1938	"	£155/2/7

The excuse is sometimes offered that S.A., instead of spending money on education, hospitals, and public welfare, has spent it on development. That's not true either. The Grants Commission report shows S.A. has consistently raised less in State revenues per head than other States - so Sir Thomas didn't raise the money and didn't spend it on development - he just didn't spend it at all.

I have said that - and it is true.

Now there are the attacks on the Playford Government for which to some extent I have been responsible. The Minister, without replying to them, calls them loose rhetoric, invective, cheap gibes, personal smears. He goes further. He says that I have uttered them not for the public good, but for my own personal advancement. He says I have said what I have, in order to oust Mr. O'Halloran as leader of my party., and supplant Sir Thomas Playford as Premier. Again, significantly enough, he cites no evidence. Throughout my Parliamentary career I have closely co-operated with Mr. O'Halloran in all I have done. I have given him my loyalty, my support, and my deep gratitude for the great help he has always been to me and for his wise leadership and counsel. Mr. Pattinson adduced no evidence to support his attack upon me because he could not.

But I have said that I consider attacks of mere personal abuse reprehensible. So they are. They debase our public life. I have always been bitterly opposed to them, and have not indulged in them. But Mr. Pattinson stands clearly convicted of the very things he has accused me of - cheap gibes, loose rhetoric and

invective, personal smears. I think I know why.
It is obvious that the truth hurts, and as he cannot
answer the truth, he retreats into childish abuse.
Goodnight.