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Title:

ALP broadcast regarding 'Premier wants to obtain an absolute majority in the House of Assembly'.

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A.L.P. BROADCAST FROM 5KA 24/10/60PRESENTED BY DON DUNSTAN MEMBER FOR NORWOOD

Good Evening:

The last two weeks in Parliament have given a clear indication to the people of this State, ^{what would happen} if the Premier were to obtain an absolute majority in the House of Assembly. If Labor maintains its members he will not have an absolute majority and must depend on the vote of at least one Independent member to get measures through the House.

Now in the first place when measures come before Parliament sponsored by the Government, which seek to amend the provisions of legislation already on our Statute Books, it is only natural that if a member of Parliament feels that some other and additional amendment to the Principal Act should be made, he should have an opportunity of moving that amendment and explaining and allowing the House to vote on it. This means that each matter can be dealt with expeditiously. The Standing Orders of the Assembly permit members to move for an instruction to the Committee of the Whole House on a Bill giving them power to consider additional amendments.

But the Premier has adopted the stand that he will prevent members from doing this. On several occasions recently he has used his party's members in the House to defeat motions which I have moved for instructions to Committees and thus has stifled a full debate in Parliament. On one matter I moved ^{to} ~~that~~ provide that Courts which have the power to re-open unconscionable money-lending transactions should be required to hold that a rate of interest in excess of 12% simple per annum was excessive and to set the transaction aside unless special and exceptional circumstances could be shown. As many moneylending companies today are fleecing the public at rates of interest which are fantastic and without any justification, this seemed a reasonable enough request. But the Premier refused to allow a full debate on the measure and used

the numbers of L.C.L. members to vote out my motion so that it could not even be considered.

Similarly, when I moved for an instruction to allow consideration of amendments to the Evidence Act suppressing publication of evidence at preliminary enquiries, he again used the numbers of the L.C.L. to stifle debate and prevent a consideration of the matter.

The Independent members, who have always supported the right of private members to be heard, voted with the Labor Party on these issues. If the Labor party had had its full strength in the House the Premier could not have stifled discussion - but because until after the Frome by-election we are down one, he was able to carry the day.

Another example of the way in which he tries to brush aside opposition was given when he tried to persuade the House to disregard an amendment which I had moved to his kidnapping bill. My amendment was designed to see that people who had a bona fide claim to custody of a child should not be held to be kidnappers merely because they took possession of the child in question. My fear, and it is a fear shared by responsible legal authorities, was that the Bill as it stood might take away the Court's right to investigate and adjudicate on custody matters in certain cases - a most undesirable course. But the Premier assured the House that if it disregarded my amendment and voted for the Bill as it stood, he would have a look at my suggestion and if he thought they were worth anything, might do something about them later. He went on to assure the House that he already had an opinion that my amendment would break down the Bill, but said he wouldn't worry the House by reading the opinion. He was forced by questions, particularly from the member for Adelaide, to read the opinion and when he did it was found to contain no such statement as he had told the House it did contain. He was then forced to adjourn the matter to get further legal options -

but you can see what he was trying to do - to mislead the House into trusting to his will in the matter, and that the House should merely rubber-stamp his view without making up its own mind.

The latest episode was the most shameful of the lot. The late Mick O'Halloran had moved a motion that:-

"In the opinion of this House the Government should take steps to readjust the House of Assembly electoral zones and the boundaries of electorates to provide a more just system for electing the House.

~~Certain members expressed their opposition to the~~

Let me turn to the subterfuge which has been put before the House by the Premier. The Premier decided he did not wish to have to vote, apparently, or did not want his members to have to vote on a motion that was before the House, so (as members on this side have pointed out) he introduced an amendment which bore no relationship at all to the substance of the motion: he went on to say that that amendment was designed to say that any reduction in country members would be undesirable and that those words would cut out the contents of the motion. The idea, of course, was to get members on this side, who wished to retain the substance of the motion, to vote against something which they were not opposed to. It was cunningly contrived. I do not intend that this House should be put in the position that it has to do that. I believe that members on this side should have the right to say clearly that they believe there should be a more just electoral system, and that they do not believe that that more just electoral system should mean a reduction in the present number of country members in this House. To that end I move."

Now the Government didn't like that and the Speaker, who is a Government member, ruled my amendment out of order on the authority that it would be out of order if moved in the House of Commons. But House of Commons procedure applies if there is nothing in South Australian standing orders about the matter. Our standing orders clearly allowed my amendment, but that didn't make any difference - again it was numbers and not justice which prevailed. Again both Independent members protested against the Speaker's ruling and supported with the Labor Party on the issue. They both voted for the Labor Party's motions - for a more just electoral system.

Now the drastic feature of all this is that the Government which is riding so roughshod over the rights of Parliament is a minority Government, in office against the wishes of the majority on a rigged electoral system. Within that Government the Premier is a dictator, simply calling the tune so that even his own Ministers don't know about his decisions, until they are announced on T.V. programs. The most obvious example of this came when the Premier recorded a T.V. talk in the morning saying South Australia would have driving tests. That afternoon the Minister of Roads, Mr. Jude, recorded a T.V. interview saying that Cabinet had not considered the matter and he could not say whether tests would ever be introduced. Luckily for the T.V. station, it discovered the discrepancy in the nick of time, but it is a fair indication of how Government is carried on here.

Well, the Premier is now appealing to the electors of Frome to elect an L.C.L. man so that he doesn't have to rely on the votes of Independents. If that happens his dictatorship will become more complete, his word will be law and no one with a different view will be able to force him even to have second thoughts. That is a grave danger for the future of this State.