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Title:

ALP broadcast regarding 'Labor Party is constantly reviewing the details of its policy',
including parts of ALP Interstate Social Services Committee's report.

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A.L.P. BROADCAST PRESENTED BY DON DUNSTAN

MEMBER FOR NORWOOD

Good Evening,

I am sorry some listeners were disappointed last Monday night that there was no broadcast in this series. Unfortunately, I was away interstate on Labor party business, and arrangements for someone else to broadcast in my place broke down.

As I have told you previously on this program the Labor Party is constantly reviewing the details of its policy and has established a series of standing committees whose duty is to inform the Federal Conference of the Labor Party on various aspects of policy. The A.L.P. has in consequence already adopted the far-reaching health program which I outlined to you a few weeks ago.

Currently, the A.L.P. is examining general pensions and social service benefits policy. While certain recommended proposals will not become official Labor policy until Federal Conference endorses the various reports due to be present to it next April, the outlines of a just policy are clear.

To give Social Service benefits in proportion to those given by the last Federal Labor Government and to clear up certain glaring anomalies, the following policies are desirable:-

- (1) By extension of the present supplementary (rental) allowance. Where the maximum is now 10/- a week, we would suggest 30/- a week. Where the conditions are now so rigid as to shut out many pensioners in urgent need of this assistance, we would recommend a liberalising of these conditions.
- (2) By establishing a system of supplementary benefits to be paid either permanently or for a particular period or for a special purpose to a social service recipient who could demonstrate a special state of need. (For example, an invalid pensioner living alone might need help to purchase a new mattress).

Basic Pension: (Age and Invalid). With the basic wage (six capital cities (as an index, to be fixed at an amount equal to £5/5/- in December, 1959, and thereafter to be varied in accordance with change in this basic wage.

National Supplementary Assistance: Rental allowance up to 30/- a week. Special payments for special needs.

Dependant Wife's Allowance: (Invalid Pensioner) to be increased from 35/- a week to the amount received by a "B" class widow. (Failure to adjust this allowance has long been a glaring anomaly and the impossibility of a couple living on one invalid pension plus 35/- needs no argument).

Child Endowment: We recommend that the proposals in the 1958 Policy Speech be repeated after taking into account increased living costs since then using the basic wage as the index. The 1958 proposals were first child 10/- instead of 5/- Second child 17/6 a week instead of 10/- 1 additional children 20/- a week, instead of 10/-. After taking into account c.o.l. increases round figures should again be used.

Maternity Allowance: Repeat 1958 proposal namely, "Labor will double the Maternity Allowance to reach £30 for the first child, rising to £35 for the fourth and subsequent children." (Note present rates were fixed by the Curtin Government in 1943).

Funeral Benefit: Increase from £10 to £30. (Note, the present rate was fixed by the Curtin Government in 1943). The Committee unsuccessfully considered how to ensure that the pensioner's relative received the benefit, not the undertaker through increased charges.

Unemployment & Sickness Benefit: Recommend increase for adult to £4 a week (now £3/5/-) for spouse £2/10/- (now £2/7/6) and for each dependent child 10/- (now paid for first child only).

Corresponding increases in benefits for minors unemployed or ill. (Note, the Curtin Government introduced these benefits in 1944 and in 1952 the Menzies Government doubled the rates, since when there has been no change until recently when the rates were further increased to the amounts shown above.

Widows' Pensions: All "A" class widows who are solely engaged in the care of their children, and not in outside employment, to receive a domestic allowance as do War Widows now. "A" class widows are those with one or more dependant children under the age of 16 years. The domestic allowance for War widows is £3 a week.

Appeals Tribunal: We recommend that applicants for social service benefits have the right of going before an Appeals Tribunal. An applicant for invalid pension may wish to contest the medical evidence, for example, or an applicant for age pension the valuation placed on his property.

Now it is always said, whenever Labor proposes specific increases in the amounts of social service payments - where's the money coming from?

At the next elections the Labor Party will give an unique vocal answer on that score. However, let me at once point out - in 1949 we proved this country was able to finance social services ~~at~~ the level now proposed - and we were in a sound financial position. If we could afford it then, and if many European countries, Sweden New Zealand and the U.K. can afford social services of that order now, why can't we do so now? Of course we can and since we can, we must, because to do less than carry out the policy Labor is now examining would be to fail in our moral duty to the underprivileged sections of our community.

The Liberal party Government ~~is~~ insists that we are more prosperous now than in 1949, if that is so why have they scaled down Social Services to less than 1949 real value.

If their contention is right, we should now afford better social services than in 1949.

Labor's proposals are reasonable and modest at least, we say, we should pay social services at the 1949 real value - we've proved we can do it before and that is a fair basis to work on.

Goodnight.