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Title:

State Election - July 12, 1975 : Australian Labor Party Rural policy

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AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY RURAL POLICY

Agriculture in South Australia is experiencing an era of unprecedented change. Fluctuating rural markets, spiralling costs and unpredictable seasons have placed tremendous pressures on our rural community.

The South Australian Government recognises that these changes are unpredictable and unavoidable. We also realise that country people don't want to be forced into the big cities and they don't want to continue farming by relying on handouts.

The aim of the South Australian Labor Government is to provide a better standard of living for rural people with greater emphasis on long term security and stability of income.

To achieve these aims we have initiated and intend to implement a range of new and far-reaching policies.

The Department of Agriculture is to be completely re-structured and re-organized on a regional basis. In the near future the Department will be divided into five major regions. Each region will have its own Director and he will be given sufficient authority to allow him to make the important decisions affecting his region.

The Department's Extension and Research Branches will also be integrated.

For the first time we will introduce the concept of a counselling service. This will be provided to complement the Department of Agriculture's present Extension services.

We believe that it is important to inform the rural community not only of the results of research but also of their opportunities under Government reconstruction, retraining and retirement programmes. These issues until now have been sadly neglected.

A policy unit will be established within the Department to ensure that research and extension meet the new objectives put forward by the Government.

In keeping with the Government's policy of achieving income stability for primary producers we intend to increase our involvement in the marketing of primary products.

The Department's Economics Section has been expanded and publications such as "Rural Market Outlook" and "Farm Forum" are now available to help producers make informed decisions.

We intend to increase the Department's involvement in providing marketing information services while continuing to promote the range of South Australia's agricultural products on overseas markets.

Livestock Industry

The cattle Industry is currently experiencing more than its share of problems. To ensure that viable producers remain in the industry until the beef market recovers the State Government has taken emergency action to provide producers with up to 1½ million dollars in carry-on finance at 4% interest. This State allocation has been matched by the Australian Government, thereby making available to the industry 3 million dollars in carry-on finance.

Although the long term solution for the meat industry is dependent on international markets the South Australian Government has played a vital role in developing trade with Middle East countries.

The Government has always recognised the importance of South Australia's livestock industry. We also recognise the need for adequate slaughtering facilities at all times but particularly during unseasonal conditions. At the moment the Government is deeply involved in a \$12 million programme to completely rehabilitate stock slaughtering facilities at Gepps Cross.

As part of this programme, work is nearing completion on a major project to provide new beef and mutton slaughtering facilities at Gepps Cross. This undertaking, when completed, will effectively double the Work's current killing capacity.

In addition, the Government has almost completed a major upgrading programme at the Government Produce Department Works at Port Lincoln. Plans are well in hand to bring these works under the control of SAMCOR.

A new meat industry Bill has been drafted to ensure that South Australian consumers will receive meat slaughtered and prepared under hygienic conditions. This legislation also provides for a meat industry authority to advise the Minister on matters concerning the meat industry.

The Government has made very significant progress in achieving its stated aim of eliminating the diseases tuberculosis and brucellosis from cattle herds in South Australia. We have already introduced legislation to organise a trace-back system through meat works in the State. This scheme will operate from the 1st July this year. Surveys of the incidence of both diseases have already been carried out and the eradication programme is now under way. It is planned to speed up this programme in the coming months, with financial assistance from the Federal Government. Indeed, in order to achieve and maintain satisfactory progress on this scheme the Animal Health Branch of the Department has been completely re-organized and expanded. We are confident that South Australia's non pastoral areas will be provisionally free of tuberculosis in 1976 and brucellosis in 1981.

Emphasis on livestock production at the moment is swinging dramatically towards objective measurement and performance recording. We are proud that the South Australian Department of Agriculture has been in the forefront in providing farmers with information about this new technology.

We intend to provide pig producers in the very near future with an on-the-farm pig testing service. This service will help producers evaluate growth rates and feed conversion with the aim of producing a better quality pig more efficiently.

Realizing the potential for livestock production in the South East of the State the Government initiated a detailed investigation of livestock marketing in the area. We fully support recommendations arising from this investigation to establish a major marketing complex at Mount Gambier and Millicent and also in the near future at Bordertown.

Wool

The research of the Department of Agriculture will be widened to include the whole range of wool production from the birth of the lamb to the delivery of wool at the store. New emphasis will be given to research into areas of labour productivity and mechanisation such as sheep handling and wool harvesting.

Dairying

The Dairy Industry is probably experiencing greater difficulties than most primary industries through rising costs of production and fluctuating world markets.

Although the South Australian dairy industry is recognised as being efficient we see the need for structural change within the industry if production costs are to be contained.

The Government strongly supports the current moves towards rationalisation within the industry but we strongly believe in the need to maintain adequate competition.

Future viability for dairy farmers in this State will depend very largely on the producers' ability to increase returns per acre while increasing production per cow. We intend to review the Agriculture Department's Dairy research and extension programmes to ensure that information is available to producers which will help them to keep farm costs to a minimum.

On the question of margarine, the South Australian Government has withstood pressures from industry vested interests and we will proceed with plans to abolish margarine quotas in January 1976.

We will make sure that agricultural legislation is not used in the future to restrict the sale of agricultural products in the State. We will, however, provide the consumer with protection through adequate definition and labelling laws.

A new spreadable butter known as "Dairy Blend" developed by the Department of Agriculture at the Northfield Research Centre cannot be manufactured at the moment because of uncertainty surrounding patent rights. We are taking necessary action to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

Agronomy

We believe that many farmers can offset fluctuating farm prices by diversifying their farm enterprises with alternate crops. The Department of Agriculture's current research and extension programme in this area will be intensified, placing particular emphasis on the development of grain legumes and oil seed crops.

Grain

The increased resistance of insect pests to insecticides and the higher standards demanded by our overseas customers for grain make grain infestation an increasing problem. The Labor Government is preparing a scheme to achieve the highest standard of grain hygiene possible through a system of voluntary certification. We believe this proposal will have the co-operation of grain growers, and will provide a system of economic incentives while keeping costs to a minimum.

Seeds

The South Australian Government has led the way in drawing up a new Seeds Act. This progressive legislation emphasises truth in labelling and gives complete protection to all sections of the industry.

In keeping with our stated policy we have taken action to expand the Department of Agriculture's seed research facilities. The purchase of 200 hectares of land in the South East will enable the Department to increase seed production research programmes while demonstrating to producers the new techniques available for the multiplication of seeds.

Trade.

During the last 2 years this Labor Government has sponsored Agricultural Trade Missions to South East Asia, the Middle East, and China. Valuable agricultural and trade links have been established in these areas.

It is significant that Libya and other oil rich Middle East countries have adopted South Australia's dry land farming methods - a compliment to this State's agricultural officers.

The Premier has already signed a joint venture with the Libyan Government to establish a demonstration farm in that country. Trade deals worth millions of dollars have already been signed. We will encourage the development of trade in this area.

Pest Control

Until recently legislation to control pests, weeds and insects in this State has been completely inadequate. We have just completed new legislation to re-organize the State's vermin control measures.

We now plan to re-organize the State's weed control programme and accordingly legislation has been drafted to establish a Pest Plants Commission and the setting up by Councils of Pest Plants Boards.

We intend to adopt wherever possible methods of integrating insect pest control. We believe the integration of maximum biological control

with minimum spraying techniques will satisfy the strictest anti-pollution standards required for our agricultural products and environment. Such a programme will also help to keep control costs to a minimum.

The Department of Agriculture has been very successful in developing biological control programmes for insect pests and weeds. We intend to strengthen our support for these measures.

Wine.

At the moment South Australia's wine industry is deeply concerned over the Australian Government's policies of taxation. It is the strong opinion of the South Australian Labor Government that these policies are wrong. We will continue to press our point of view and use every endeavour to bring about a change of attitude in Canberra.

Notwithstanding the problems now facing the wine industry, we have complete faith in its future in this State. We are developing plans that will lead to a major reconstruction programme for the wine grapegrower. Research has shown the need for large quantities of high-yielding, disease-free vines.

This Government will provide extra funds to allow this important programme to proceed as quickly as possible.

Poultry

For years South Australian egg producers have experienced over-production and disastrously low returns. In 1970 the Government drew up long-term plans to re-organise the industry. We have established a new Egg Board free of vested interests. We have introduced new legislation to enable producers to tailor their production to market demands. We have thus brought stability to the industry and we are providing the consumer with a quality product at the lowest possible cost.

The Labor Government will place further emphasis on consumer protection in the future. Following a detailed investigation, the Egg Board will proceed with plans to bring about a more rapid distribution of eggs from the producer to retail outlets. This system will provide South Australia with the most advanced egg distribution system in Australia.

Last year the Labor Government acted quickly to protect South Australia's \$12 million chicken industry from marketing chaos. After consultation with the industry we prepared legislation to ensure that all contracts between producers and processors are approved by an Industry Committee. This legislation will provide a level of protection to both parties during all phases of growing and processing. This legislation in particular will protect the small viable producer.

The Government realizes the importance of the family unit in farm production and accordingly we intend to adopt appropriate measures where we see his viability is threatened by concentrated market power.

Research

The Labor Government recognises that one of the major problems facing the primary producer at the moment is associated with rising costs of wages. We intend to examine research programmes designed to reduce farm costs. We are particularly concerned with the need to improve sheep handling and wool harvesting methods.

Information Services

The Labor Government sees the need to upgrade the information services of the Department of Agriculture to ensure that the research and extension work of the Department reaches the widest audience and departmental officers are spared routine enquiries. The information provided by the Department will be tabulated and indexed into a fact sheet system that will make the retrieval of information straightforward for farmers.

Water

To achieve the most effective planning of South Australia's water resources the Labor Government has established a Water Resources Branch with overall responsibility for planning the utilisation of the State's water for the maximum benefit. Research is continuing to improve irrigation efficiency and reduce drainage. The process of rehabilitation of the headworks is under way at Kingston on Murray. This will give greater opportunity for sprinkler and drip irrigation by supplying water on demand.

The Government aims to achieve a stability of per capita domestic consumption in the urban areas by providing advice on dryland gardening techniques and taking more account of water requirements in urban planning.

Home Gardening

The home garden advisory services of the Department of Agriculture will be completely re-organised to provide a better service to home owners. The service will provide advice on the planning and maintenance of gardens which will minimise the use of water. We believe the service provided will improve the urban environment and reduce water costs to consumers. It will be an aim of the service to show home owners how to plan gardens which require the minimum of regular maintenance.

Country Fire Services

The Government will proceed with its plans for the re-organization of the Emergency Fire Service into a highly co-ordinated, modern volunteer firefighting force. Comprehensive legislation to revise the present Bush Fires Act and to provide for the new organization has been drafted, a suitable area of land at Keswick has been reserved for a headquarters, and preliminary planning of the complex is well under way. The present system of subsidising expenditure by EFS organizations and local governing authorities on fire fighting equipment will be continued.

Fisheries

The Government recognises the many problems facing the South Australian Fishing Industry and will take immediate steps to help the industry overcome them.

Accordingly, the Government intends to double its present allocation to this important South Australian industry.

Staff and accommodation will be provided to ensure the Fisheries Department are able to fully service the industry and expand their current research programme. The Department currently have plans before them to

- . Explore the potential of deep sea fishing in South East waters
- . Expand exploration programmes for fishing south of Kangaroo Island.

This research is designed to offset the disastrous loss of income experienced by shark fishermen following restrictive interstate legislation concerning the mercury content of fish.

The Department will also expand the research programmes into oyster and yabby farming.

The Government recognises the importance of fisheries management and will provide finance for the Fisheries Department to retain the services of an international fishing economist to help establish a suitable management programme for South Australia.

To help maintain the viability of each of the State's fishing resources the Department will proceed to draw up plans to reconstruct the industry through a buy back programme. Discussions on this matter have already been held with the Australian Department of Fisheries.

The Fisheries Department will completely review the present method of issuing fishing licences, authorities and permits and extra staff will be provided to assist the Department's administration section.