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Title:
Article for 'Advertiser' - Decentralisation

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ARTICLE FROM THE PREMIER, DON DUNSTAN, FOR GREG KELTON ("ADVERTISER")
SEPTEMBER 25, 1975.

DECENTRALISATION

The Government believes that it is necessary to decentralise in South Australia, but any decentralisation policy must be to provide the decentralisation to large urban centres outside Adelaide. There is no decentralisation policy which we can follow which will provide a means of small country towns improving their present employment level, unless there's some particular local resource which can be used for employment purposes.

The decentralisation policy follows examination of decentralisation policy around the world and it has been found that in order to decentralise in any meaningful way, then you have to do it so that you are providing the benefits of urban existence and that can only be done in large country centres.

The Government has made it clear that it's decentralisation therefore will be concentrated in the Iron Triangle Area at the head of Spencers Gulf, where we will be able to use the resources of the sea and of the coalfields and the gas and oil fields for the provision of a reasonable urban area.

To Mount Gambier, Millicent, Naracoorte and Penola in the South-East, centred around Mount Gambier. We believe that this operation should also take in the west and south-western districts of Victoria, including Portland, because of Portland's importance as a port to the total region.

In this area we have to concentrate on the development of forestry industry and of small industry which can fill in on the basis of local resources, including stable man-power resources. It was on this basis that we provided the building for Fletcher Jones and gave them special grants to establish in Mount Gambier: the basis of our taking over the factory in Millicent and developing it for Safcol: the large amount of money that we put into the Naracoorte meat works.

We also propose decentralisation to Monarto but in that case we are using for the basis of industry in Monarto, certain science-based industries which we believe we can establish there around the kind of tertiary and research institutions we can put into Monarto and engineering industries on the basis of Adelaide's manufacturer supply base. But if we are to do that in a decentralised situation, it still has to be close enough to the transport and port facilities of Adelaide and the actual manufacturer's supplies in foundry products and the like and componentry to make it economic.

Outside of that, we have, of course, propped up particular industries where they are of benefit to a country town, such as the Shearers operation at Mannum, and we've given very signal assistance to do this. But it is inevitable that there will be a lessening of population in smaller country towns in South Australia which haven't got anything other than a primary industry resource base.

The reason for that is that primary industry is becoming less and less labour-intensive - that's the first thing. The second thing is that people more and more want the benefits of urban existence and you cannot give a full range of facilities in a small country town. Therefore, people naturally drift to the larger urban areas where they can get the facilities of urban existence, and that's an inevitable trend which there is no way of reversing.

From a social point of view, we do not believe that the urban agglomeration should be allowed to become too large, and that is why we are intent on getting decentralisation to larger urban centres in the country, but we can't pretend our decentralisation programme is going to prop up the smaller of the country towns. Unless there is a local resource base, there's very little we can do.