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**Title:**

5KA talk by Acting Leader of the Opposition - Plight of the aged and infirm

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5KA TALK BY ACTING LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (MR. CORCORAN).

EVERY AUSTRALIAN CITIZEN, IN MY VIEW, SHOULD BE VITALLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE PLIGHT CONFRONTING THE AGED AND INFIRM *Persons* OF THIS COUNTRY.

AT A RECENT BY-ELECTION IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA FOR THE FEDERAL SEAT OF CURTIN, THE ATTENTION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC WAS *the* DRAWN TO ONE OF THE INIQUITOUS PENALTIES THAT EXISTS IN THE AUSTRALIAN SOCIAL SERVICE SCHEME. *Publicly*

THIS WAS BECAUSE AN INDEPENDENT CANDIDATE FOR CURTIN POLLED EXTREMELY WELL, ALTHOUGH HIS ONLY PLATFORM WAS THE ABOLITION OF THE MEANS TEST.

~~THE~~ LABOR POLICY FOR MANY YEARS HAS PROVIDED FOR THE ABOLITION <sup>*THIS*</sup> OF THE TEST.

IN FACT DURING THE BEN CHIFLEY GOVERNMENT'S TERM OF OFFICE ~~FROM 1945 TO 1949~~, A NATIONAL WELFARE SCHEME WAS ESTABLISHED WITH ONE OF ITS PRUPOSES BEING TO FINANCE THE ABOLITION OF THE MEANS TEST.

THIS FUND WAS SUBSEQUENTLY DISSIPATED BY THE MENZIES GOVERNMENT. HAD IT BEEN ALLOWED TO REMAIN, MANY OF THE PROBLEMS FACING OUR AGED TODAY WOULD NOT EXIST.

WE OFTEN HEAR FEDERAL LIBERAL MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT FROM SOUTH AUSTRALIA SYMPATHISING WITH THE PROBLEMS FACING THE AGED COMMUNITY, AND SAYING WHAT SHOULD BE DONE TO ASSIST PENSIONERS. BUT WE MUST REMEMBER THAT ~~XXXXXX~~ <sup>FEDERAL</sup> THE L.C.L. GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN IN POWER FOR THE LAST 20 YEARS, AND IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT AS FAR BACK AS 1949 IT PROMISED THE ABOLITION OF THE MEANS TEST, IT HAS STILL DONE NOTHING MORE THAN TO SLIGHTLY EASE ITS APPLICATION.

ON EVERY OCCAISION THAT THE LABOR PARTY IN CANBERRA HAS MOVED IN THE HOUSE TO IMPROVE SOCIAL SERVICE BENEFITS, PARTICULARLY TO PENSIONERS, <sup>*ALL*</sup> THE L.C.L. MP'S FROM THIS STATE, DESPITE THEIR BOASTS THAT THEY ARE FIGHTING TO HELP THE NEEDY, HAVE VOTED AGAINST THE A.L.P. PROPOSALS.

For example when an amendment to <sup>the</sup> Social Services Bill was moved by the Labor Opposition <sup>last year</sup> to increase Pension Rates, to enable pensioners to enjoy a reasonable standard of <sup>living</sup> and for all Social Service Benefits to be adjusted in each year's Budget to meet increases in living costs and for the abolition of the means Test it was defeated with all the members of the party against it.

THE L.C.L. GOVERNMENT HAS SAID THAT IT WOULD BE RUINOUS TO ABOLISH THE MEANS TEST, AS IT WOULD COST \$340 MILLION, HOWEVER, THE LEADER OF THE FEDERAL OPPOSITION, MR. GOUGH WHITLAM, HAS POINTED OUT THAT THIS IS NOT THE CASE.

HE HAS SAID THAT IT COST ONLY \$65 MILLION TO PROVIDE A PENSION TO ALL PEOPLE ~~OVER~~ 75 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER, IRRESPECTIVE OF THEIR INCOME, WHILE IT WOULD COST A MERE \$12 MILLION TO PROVIDE SIMILAR BENEFITS TO ALL PEOPLE AGED 74 YEARS.

AND IT CAN BE SHOWN QUITE CONCLUSIVELY THAT IT WOULD BE PRACTICAL TO ABOLISH THE MEANS TEST OVER A PERIOD OF TWO PARLIAMENTS.

HOWEVER, APART FROM THE MEANS TEST, THERE ARE MANY OTHER ~~MATTERS~~ ASPECTS OF SOCIAL SERVICES WHICH THE LIBERAL GOVERNMENT HAS TRIED TO SHRUG OFF AS NOT BEING IMPORTANT.

THE LABOR PARTY HAS A CLEAR CUT POLICY WITH REGARD TO SOCIAL SERVICES, AND THESE ARE QUITE DIFFERENT FROM THE SHODDY APPROACH MADE TO THEM BY THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT.

SOME OF THESE POLICIES ARE AS FOLLOWS.

THE PAYMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICE BENEFITS AT THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE RATE WARRANTED BY THE RESPECTIVE SERVICES.

THE PAYMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICE BENEFITS TO ASSIST THE NEEDY SECTIONS OF THE COMMUNITY, AND THUS REMOVE GROSS INEQUALITIES IN LIVING STANDARDS.