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Title:

ALP broadcast by J.D. Corcoran, Acting Leader of the Opposition - Electoral reform

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GOOD EVENING :

YOU WILL ALL RECALL THAT PRIOR TO THE LAST GENERAL STATE ELECTION IN MARCH, 1968, THE LABOR PARTY ADVANCED A POLICY ON ELECTORAL REFORM WHICH PROVIDED FOR A 56-MEMBER HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY BASED ON ONE VOTE ONE VALUE. THE L.C.L. GOVERNMENT, AT THE SAME TIME, ADVOCATED SO-CALLED ELECTORAL REFORM BASED ON A 45-SEAT HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY. IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT THE LABOR PARTY GAINED A 52% VOTE OVERALL, IT STILL DID NOT HAVE SUFFICIENT REPRESENTATION IN THE PARLIAMENT TO PUT ITS POLICY INTO EFFECT. SUBSEQUENTLY AT THE BY-ELECTION FOR THE SEAT OF MILLICENT, MR. HALL STATED THAT HE WOULD CONSIDER A VICTORY FOR HIS CANDIDATE AS A MANDATE TO INTRODUCE HIS ELECTORAL REFORM PROPOSALS. THIS, OF COURSE, WAS PLACING THE RESPONSIBILITY ON APPROXIMATELY 8,000 PEOPLE TO MAKE A DECISION THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN ON A STATE-WIDE BASIS. FORTUNATELY FOR THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA, MR. HALL WAS DENIED HIS VICTORY IN MILLICENT AND CONSEQUENTLY COULD NOT PROCEED WITH HIS PROPOSALS. THIS WAS SO BECAUSE IN ORDER TO ALTER THE CONSTITUTION, IT WAS NECESSARY TO HAVE WHAT IS KNOWN AS A CONSTITUTIONAL MAJORITY, THAT IS TO SAY MORE THAN HALF THE TOTAL MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE MUST FAVOUR IT, BUT BECAUSE OF THE STATE OF THE HOUSE THIS WAS NOT POSSIBLE WITHOUT THE SUPPORT OF THE LABOR PARTY. THEREFORE, HE WAS FORCED TO COMPROMISE AND THE BILL THAT WAS INTRODUCED DURING THE LAST SESSION OF PARLIAMENT PROVIDED FOR A 47-SEAT HOUSE WITH A RATIO OF TWO TO ONE BETWEEN METROPOLITAN AND COUNTRY AREAS.

WHILST THIS DID NOT MEET THE FULL REQUIREMENTS OF LABOR POLICY, IT WAS CONSIDERED TO BE A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION IN THAT IT LESSENS THE EFFECT OF THE PRESENT GERRY-MANDER WHICH PROVIDES 26 COUNTRY SEATS AND ONLY 13 METROPOLITAN SEATS AND WHERE SOME MEMBERS IN COUNTRY AREAS REPRESENT AS FEW AS 5,000 ELECTORS, AND SOME MEMBERS IN THE METROPOLITAN AREA

REPRESENT IN EXCESS OF 45,000 ELECTORS.

THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION WHICH HAS BEEN SET UP UNDER THE ACT AND WHICH COMPRISES OF MR. JUSTICE BRIGHT, THE STATE ELECTORAL OFFICER (MR. DOUGLASS), AND THE SURVEYOR-GENERAL (MR. BAILEY), IS CURRENTLY MEETING AND IS TAKING EVIDENCE FROM INTERESTED PARTIES IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH A BOUNDARY FOR THE METROPOLITAN AREA. WHEN THEIR FINDINGS ARE COMPLETE ON THIS MATTER, THEY WILL REPORT THEM TO THE GOVERNOR AND THEN THEY WILL BE IN A POSITION TO RECEIVE EVIDENCE ON ELECTORAL DISTRICT BOUNDARIES. IT IS EXPECTED THAT THE FINAL REPORT SHOULD BE AVAILABLE TOWARDS THE END OF THIS YEAR. THE GOVERNMENT WILL THEN BE REQUIRED TO DRAW UP A BILL FOR PRESENTATION TO THE HOUSE CONTAINING THE COMMISSION'S PROPOSALS. PARLIAMENT, OF COURSE, WILL STILL BE COMPETENT TO ALTER THESE RECOMMENDATIONS IF IT SO DESIRES.

MR. HALL HAS STATED THAT HE IS THE FIRST PREMIER OF THIS STATE TO HAVE ACHIEVED SIGNIFICANT ELECTORAL REFORM. HOWEVER, I AM SURE THAT THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA WILL REALIZE THAT EVEN SO FAR AS HE HAS GONE IS ONLY AS A RESULT OF THIS BEING FORCED UPON HIM BY PRESSURE FROM THE LABOR PARTY OPPOSITION. HE OVERLOOKS, OF COURSE, THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL IN THE MATTER OF ELECTORAL REFORM. I AM SURE THAT IT IS QUITE CLEAR TO THE PEOPLE OF THIS STATE THAT NO MATTER HOW MUCH REFORM IS CARRIED OUT IN THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY, THIS CANNOT BE COMPLETELY EFFECTIVE UNTIL THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL IS ALSO REFORMED BECAUSE OF THE POWERS THAT IT HOLDS, IN THAT IT CAN REJECT OUTRIGHT ANY MEASURE PLACED BEFORE IT BY THE PROPERLY ELECTED HOUSE. VOTING FOR THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL IS STILL BASED ON A RESTRICTED FRANCHISE, INVOLVING PROPERTY QUALIFICATION AND IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT THE LEADER OF THE STATE OPPOSITION, DON DUNSTAN, MOVED DURING THE LAST SESSION OF PARLIAMENT THAT THE FRANCHISE OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL BE PLACED ON THE SAME BASIS AS THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

NEVER BEFORE IN THE HISTORY OF THE STATE PARLIAMENT
HAVE CABINET MEMBERS VOTED AGAINST A MAJOR CONSTITUTIONAL
MATTER WHEN IT WAS SUPPORTED BY THE PREMIER. I THINK THIS
INDICATES JUST HOW FAR CERTAIN MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT ARE
PREPARED TO GO IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN THIS COMPLETELY
UNREPRESENTATIVE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL IN ITS PRESENT STATE.

GOOD NIGHT.