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Article - The First Six Months of the LCL Government

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ARTICLE, "THE FIRST SIX MONTHS OF
THE L.C.L. GOVERNMENT", BY THE
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION, THE HON.
DON DUNSTAN, Q.C., M.P. 1-11-68.

The contrast between the first six months in office of the Labor Government in South Australia, and the first six months of the present L.C.L. Government, is startling.

The L.C.L. Government activity has bordered on complete inertness, and they have mismanaged in most spheres.

When the Labor Government took office in 1965, South Australia saw in almost every area of government a whole series of announcements, about reform and improvement, and some of the most sweeping changes in legislation and administration this State has ever seen.

The only real measures introduced by the L.C.L. have been regular Government business, and even these they have not handled efficiently.

Close examination of the Loan estimates, one of the annual monetary measures of the Government reveals the shabby and base politicking of the L.C.L. when it was in Opposition. We were charged with impropriety for using Loan Funds for Capital works which had not previously been charged to the Loan Account but to the Revenue Account. Yet this year's Loan Estimates reveal that the Treasurer has perpetuated the charging to the Loan Account of works that the Labor Government had charged in the same way. Now they have gone even further. They have borrowed money against a Revenue deficit.

The Budget introduced by the L.C.L. Government was a complete repudiation of things it said when in Opposition, and was a deflationary Budget when there is a need in South Australia for a stimulus to the economy. The taxation measures introduced are the most severe since the 1930's.

The Government announced seven new taxes apart from the new Racing taxes, all but one of which are imposts which either inhibit business or hit those who can least afford to pay it.

Electoral redistribution is a subject on which the L.C.L. are happy to give lip service, but that is where their 'eagerness' ends. While stating 'reform' was needed in South Australia, Mr. Hall and the Government continued to filibuster and procrastinate. Finally they introduced a Bill to have 47 members in the House of Assembly. Yet even this Bill, introduced after years of prompting by the Labor Party, contains a series of inconsistencies which need amendment. It could be an improvement, but even so, we still have fewer members of Parliament than any other mainland State. In fact, more than 20 less than Queensland - a State of comparable size.

The M.A.T.S. report is another of the Government's releases which, if it is effected, will hit all South Australians, but country people especially hard. Under this report, there is a 190 per cent difference between the expenditure increases in the city and the country, very strongly favoring the city. The M.A.T.S. Report and the L.C.L. Government will take away from country people a large part of their entitlement to road funds and will increase their taxes as well. Added to this, there is the extension of the road maintenance taxes to meet construction costs.

A recent division in the House of Assembly was on the question of excess water rates. The Labor Party tried to prevent the imposition of these charges, but was defeated on the casting vote of the Speaker. All Government Members supported the charges which will hit country districts where water is used in large quantities. The L.C.L. claims it protects country interests, and then does this. It is a direct hit at country areas where water is needed for

Since the L.C.L. took over Government, we have heard statements from the Minister for Labor and Industry, that the employment situation is recovering. It is a fact that there has been a mass exodus of tradesmen and workers out of South Australia in a search for work which they cannot get in this State under the L.C.L. Government. According to union officials in South Australia, the inactivity in the building industry has occurred since the advent of the L.C.L. Government. It is true that the South Australian registered unemployment figure is now down to 1.3 percent, but this gives a false impression, received because so many workers have left the State. If anything, it indicates just how large is the number of people leaving South Australia for work.

Before he went to the Premier's Conference, Mr. Hall said he would be using his own submissions and that it was not worthwhile using the submissions I prepared in February. Mr. Hall said the Federal Government would have answers to the submissions I had prepared. Yet, when he arrived in Canberra, the submissions were given to the press. These submissions were virtually a verbatim copy of those I prepared. It is statements like these that must draw a large question mark over the credibility of Mr. Hall's pronouncements. Of course the L.C.L., in an attempt to appear active, have made a few announcements, most of which on checking, had already been made by the Labor Government. In fact in some instances work had already started on Labor Government projects when the L.C.L. made an announcement about the commencement of work.

Since the Hall Government took office, we have seen several important industries close down, and at the same time have heard promises to 'get South Australia moving.' Mr. Hall has made a trip overseas, which he says was to help attract industry to this State.

Yet he has not to this day made even a general announcement that the trip was beneficial or that it could yield new industries. While I appreciate the fact that he may have given assurances to several companies not to mention certain things, he must have some idea of generally how much worth the trip had. While he maintains that the Labor Government did nothing to boost industry in South Australia he said on returning to Adelaide that the State's reputation is high in industrial and investment circles overseas, but that he is cautious about predicting new industries. I would like to know how the State's reputation can be high if the Labor Government did nothing for industry in the last three years.

The latest argument in the L.C.L. ranks is concerning full adult franchise for the Legislative Council. The Premier, Mr. Hall, the Attorney-General, and the Minister for Works, have all said that it is necessary to allow everyone in the State to have a vote for the Legislative Council. Half the cabinet, including all the members in the Upper House, however, do not agree with this. The right to vote, of course, is a fundamental, constitutional principle, and not a mere matter for private influence by Ministers. If Mr. Hall does not insist that his Ministers follow his own line on this, then he is certainly not fighting to establish democracy in South Australia, but merely pretending that he believes in it and allowing his own ministerial colleagues to thwart it. It would appear that Legislative Council members, including Mr. Hall's ministers, are going to defy the wishes of the overwhelming majority of the people represented in the House of Assembly. A calculation of the population represented by the members supporting adult suffrage for the Legislative Council, shows that 90% of the people in this State are represented by these representatives.

While the L.C.L. Government has not done much to boost South Australia, it has certainly confused a lot more people with its failure to act and its inability to handle normal Government business and routine business matters correctly.

There are many instances of the Government's utter incompetence, connected with Chowilla Dam, Building, Festival Hall, Education, Fisheries, Aboriginal Affairs, Industrial Development, Social Services, hospitals and many other areas.

One of the most common mistakes made by members of the L.C.L. Government is their inability to concur in public statements. The fickle mind of the Government is quite obvious from a long list of inconsistencies and contradictions it has presented to the public of South Australia.

There are many things on which I could have written. In fact this article contains only a minor percentage of the inconsistencies and examples of mismanagement the L.C.L. Government has committed.
