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Title:

Statement: Petrol shortage and emergency measures taken

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STATEMENT BY THE PREMIER, HON. DON DUNSTAN, Q.C., M.P. 29.7.72.

Since the crisis situation in relation to Petrol supplies arose on Friday - because it was at that stage that it became clear that alternate supplies of petrol to those already existing in South Australia could not occur within a short period, the Government has been endeavouring, in conjunction with the oil companies, to assess what our resources are and to allocate petrol on the basis of need in what is really quite a crisis situation.

The position as it obtains now is worse than anybody first thought. We have more petrol available than was the original estimate. There is 800,000 gallons of premium petrol, 850,000 gallons of regular petrol, and enough distillate to last us for some period longer than petrol will last us. Distillate, of course, is used for the public transport situation. But at the rate that emergency permits have been being issued in the metropolitan area in the last 24 hours (or rather less than that), we will only with that petrol available to us have some five days of petrol supplies left. Now that is very much less than any estimate previously given to the Government from any reliable source whatever. As a result of this, we are now having to restrict the permits which the Government is issuing for the use of petrol. Permits will only from now on be issued to medical practitioners nominated by the Australian Medical Association, wholesale meat suppliers, wholesale suppliers of perishable foods, and milk vendors. The emergency supplies for public transport, police, hospitals, ambulances, fire brigade, bread manufacturers and milk processing plants, will be made through the bulk supplies held by the organisations concerned. No permits are to be issued to individual employees in those industries unless the employer does not have a bulk supply and authorises that it is essential for an employee to be at work before public transport commences in the morning and finishes in the evening. In all cases the permit will be limited to 10 gallons.

No further permits will be issued to retail suppliers of perishable foods. Permits to enable Meals on Wheels and the District and Bush Nursing Society to continue will in future be issued only to persons nominated in writing by those organizations and limited to ten gallons.

Now let me turn to the situation as we see it and how it has been criticised by the various voices of the Opposition in South Australia. Dr. Eastick, the official Leader of the Opposition has said that he appreciates the need to conserve petrol supplies and will co-operate to the full to meet this necessity. However, he has said that the blame is at the feet of the Union hierarchy and that the Government has failed to appreciate earlier the seriousness of the situation. Well as to the first of those statements, we can all go into that sort of politicking very easily. I don't intend to do that in this crisis situation in South Australia. The question is to get the job done and not to play Party politics.

But, as to appreciating earlier the seriousness of the situation, the serious situation only in fact arose on Friday and nobody could have moved more swiftly than the Government has done. In fact we were also condemned by the Opposition for moving as speedily as we did.

The worst statement, however, in this whole situation has come from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition who is also the Deputy Leader of Mr. Hall's Movement, and he has attacked the legality of the Government's action and suggested that we have no basis for it. In fact what has been done by the Government has been on the advice of the Solicitor-General. The Proclamation was drafted by him. In fact, the Industrial Code provides for the Government to alter shop hours in South Australia and that we have done to restrict them to almost nil and during the restricted hours people under the Code may only from shops - and

that means petrol stations in this case - issue petrol under permit. Now that is perfectly proper and legal and anybody who defies the action which has been taken in the public interest will be prosecuted as he should be, and I believe it is disgraceful in this situation facing the public of South Australia that people should try to play Party politics with what would be the lives of people in South Australia unless we all take care.

It is vital for us now not to be divided in this community about this, but to keep together to see to it that we conserve petrol supplies for the maintenance of normal public services and of human life in this State.
