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Title:

Speech at the Opening of the Social Welfare Department's Norwood Office

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SPEECH BY THE PREMIER, MR. DUNSTAN, AT THE OPENING OF THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT'S NORWOOD OFFICE. 3/2/72.

YOUR WORSHIP, MR. COX, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

I TAKE PARTICULAR PLEASURE IN BEING HERE TODAY TO OPEN THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT'S NORWOOD OFFICE. AS PREMIER I TAKE PRIDE AND SATISFACTION IN THE EXPANSION AND REFORM OF STATE SOCIAL SERVICES UNDERTAKEN SINCE WE WERE RETURNED TO OFFICE. WITH LEN KING AS MINISTER GREAT STRIDES HAVE BEEN TAKEN IN HUMANISING AND OVERHAULING OUR WHOLE APPROACH TO THIS ESSENTIAL AREA OF COMMUNITY SERVICE. AS HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY MEMBER FOR NORWOOD I'M PERSONALLY DELIGHTED THAT THE KENSINGTON-NORWOOD AREA IS ONE OF THE FOCAL POINTS OF THIS EXPANDED OPERATION. ESTABLISHMENT OF THIS OFFICE SERVING THE CITIES OF KENSINGTON - NORWOOD AND BURNSIDE WILL BE OF CONSIDERABLE BENEFIT TO PEOPLE LIVING IN THIS AREA AND SAVE THEM MUCH HARDSHIP. EQUALLY IMPORTANT IT WILL ENABLE THE DEPARTMENT TO TAILOR, MUCH MORE EFFECTIVELY THAN IN THE PAST, THE SERVICES IT PROVIDES TO THE NEEDS OF THE LOCAL PEOPLE.

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THIS IS, IN FACT, ONE OF THE CORNERSTONES OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT'S SOCIAL WELFARE POLICY - THE RELATION OF SERVICES AT LOCAL COMMUNITY LEVEL TO THE NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE. THE OTHER IS THE ABSOLUTE ACCEPTANCE OF THE RIGHT OF THE INDIVIDUAL TO A REASONABLE STANDARD OF LIVING AND HIS OR HER RIGHT TO FEEL A RESPECTED MEMBER OF SOCIETY. THESE PRINCIPLES HAVE BEEN STATED ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS. THEY WILL SHORTLY BE EMBODIED IN A NEW COMMUNITY WELFARE BILL TO BE BROUGHT BEFORE STATE PARLIAMENT WHICH WILL GIVE LEGISLATIVE EXPRESSION TO THE PROGRAMME FOR RE-ORGANISATION AND DECENTRALISATION WE ANNOUNCED EARLIER. IN THE MEANTIME MUCH HAS ALREADY BEEN DONE TO DECENTRALISE WELFARE SERVICES AND TO GET THEM CLOSER TO THOSE WHO NEED THEM. AT THE END OF JUNE, 1970, THE DEPARTMENT HAD DISTRICT OFFICES IN NINE CENTRES IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA. SINCE THEN ANOTHER SIX HAVE BEEN OPENED OF WHICH NORWOOD IS THE LATEST. IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS IT'S PLANNED TO OPEN DISTRICT OFFICES IN WOODVILLE, CAMPBELLTOWN, MURRAY BRIDGE, MITCHAM AND THE YORKE PENINSULA.

THESE DISTRICT OFFICES ARE FORERUNNERS OF THE PROPOSED COMMUNITY WELFARE CENTRES WHICH WILL BE THE COMMUNITY WELFARE DEPARTMENT'S - ITS NEW TITLE - PRINCIPAL POINT OF CONTACT WITH THE PUBLIC.

SOCIAL WORKERS AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SPECIALISTS WILL USE THESE CENTRES AS A BASE AND THEY WILL ALSO HAVE PARTICULAR FUNCTIONS IN SUCH MATTERS AS PROBATION, ASSISTANCE OF THOSE IN DIFFICULTY AND JUVENILE COURT MATTERS.

ONE EXCITING FEATURE OF THIS PLANNED DEVELOPMENT IS THAT WE HOPE TO SET UP LOCAL ADVISORY COUNCILS CONSISTING OF REPRESENTATIVE, PROMINENT CITIZENS IN THE PARTICULAR AREAS WHO WILL BE ABLE TO SUGGEST NEW IDEAS AND POLICIES TO MAKE THEM MORE RESPONSIVE TO THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE DISTRICT.

ALL THIS WILL, WE BELIEVE, RESULT IN VERY MUCH IMPROVED SERVICES AND A MORE SENSITIVE APPLICATION OF REMEDIES TO SOCIAL ILLS.

AS I SAID I'M VERY PLEASED THAT NORWOOD IS ONE OF THE FOCAL POINTS OF THE OVERALL RE-ORGANISATION OF THE SOCIAL WELFARE OPERATIONS. I'M PROFOUNDLY UNHAPPY, HOWEVER, TO THINK THAT - UNLESS DRASTIC ACTION IS TAKEN SHORTLY - THERE WILL SOON BE NEW CALLS ON ITS SERVICES AS OUR MOUNTING UNEMPLOYMENT BITES HOME. IT'S SHOCKING TO THINK THAT IN THE SPACE OF LITTLE MORE THAN A WEEK 550 FAMILIES IN ONE INDUSTRY IN THIS STATE HAVE LOST THEIR MAIN SOURCE OF LIVELIHOOD. IT MAKES ME WONDER FRANKLY WHETHER THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CREATION OF THE ECONOMIC CONDITIONS WHICH BRING THIS ABOUT APPRECIATE THAT IT'S PEOPLE THEY'RE DEALING WITH NOT ECONOMIC UNITS. TO EMBARK ON A POLICY WHICH ACTUALLY REQUIRES AN INCREASE IN UNEMPLOYMENT IS NOT ONLY ECONOMIC ABSURDITY IT'S DOWNRIGHT CALLOUS. TO BE QUITE EUPHEMISTIC ABOUT IT UNEMPLOYMENT ON THIS SCALE CAN CREATE GREAT SOCIAL DISRUPTION. IN PLAINER LANGUAGE IT BRINGS MISERY AND BITTERNESS. UNLESS IMMEDIATE ACTION IS TAKEN IN CANBERRA TO INCREASE DEMAND, THE DOLE QUEUES OF AUSTRALIA WILL LENGTHEN.

AND THERE ARE FEW MORE DISGUSTING SIGHTS IN A PROFESSEDLY AFFLUENT SOCIETY SUCH AS OURS THAN A DOLE QUEUE. THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS NOW BUSILY PUTTING OUT STORIES THAT IT'S CONSIDERING RAISING THE PRESENT PATHETIC UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT. IT'S ABOUT TIME. AND IT'S ABOUT TIME, TOO, THAT THEY ACCEPTED THAT PEOPLE WANT JOBS NOT HANDOUTS. AND DID SOMETHING ABOUT THAT. I INTEND TO PRESS THIS HOME AT THE PREMIERS' CONFERENCE LATER THIS MONTH. I HOPE, TOO, THAT, TRADE UNION, INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL GROUPS AND ASSOCIATIONS THROUGHOUT SOUTH AUSTRALIA WILL MAKE THEIR OWN REPRESENTATIONS TO THE COMMONWEALTH IMPRESSING ON THEM THE NEED FOR ACTION. WE HAVE THE RESOURCES - HUMAN AND MATERIAL - TO MAINTAIN A SITUATION OF FULL EMPLOYMENT IF WE HARNESS THEM INTELLIGENTLY. SIR, THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THIS OFFICE WILL, I'M SURE, PROVE OF CONTINUING BENEFIT TO THIS AREA. IT'S A MOST USEFUL SUPPLEMENT TO STATE GOVERNMENT SERVICES AND IT GIVES ME PLEASURE TO NOW OFFICIALLY DECLARE IT OPEN.