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**Title:**

Speech by the Premier, Don Dunstan, at 1977 ALP State Convention

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12.6.77

Mr. Chairman, Delegates,

The last year has been a crucial time for the Labor Party in South Australia, for in both the State and Federal spheres developments have occurred which will influence the Labor Movement's programmes in a number of areas.

At the State level, the Government has continued its record of reform, progressive administration and concern for the people of South Australia, especially wage and salary earners and their families.

The range of policies which are improving our community physically and socially have been maintained and, in many cases, expanded.

The progress which has been made in education, health and hospitals, community welfare, consumer protection, environmental matters, transport and in the other areas of government, have given our State a style of living which is admired and envied.

Our achievements in bringing South Australia from the bottom of the ladder to the top in so many areas have substantially improved the lives of South Australians, so much so that many people forget how much had to be done to overcome the years of Liberal neglect.

Certainly the Liberal Party doesn't want people to remember that under their administration South Australia had the worst health and hospital services in Australia, the second to worst record in education, only exceeded by the Banana Republic, virtually no community welfare facilities and totally inadequate public transport. The Liberal Party in South Australia doesn't want to talk about the policies it still has which if ever they were to get into office would take the State backwards again. If the Liberal Party isn't honest enough to spell out to the community the practical effects of its policies, then Labor Party members must do it.

Every time a Liberal Party politician says the public service should be reduced, Labor Party members must explain to their friends, workmates, neighbour and everyone else what this means. This euphemism "reducing the public service" means sacking teachers, sacking nurses, sacking bus and tram and train drivers, and sacking road and building workers, to name only a few areas. It means fewer policemen, fewer doctors in our hospitals, fewer community welfare workers.

When Liberal politicians talk in this way, they carefully avoid being specific. They don't say that 50 percent of the growth in our public service has been in the area of teachers, nurses and community welfare workers. That increase was necessary because of the Liberals' neglect.

Nor, when they talk of cutting the public service, do they talk about the extra people necessary to provide consumer protection, to work in our new national parks, or the people necessary to do the planning work for Adelaide and South Australia.

Mr. Fraser went to Mount Gambier recently, and he repeated the same line for the local Liberals. He didn't realise that the State Government had employed more nurses at the Mount Gambier Hospital, had built new schools which required extra teachers in the city, and staffed new regional offices of government departments such as Motor Vehicles and Prices and Consumer Affairs. The people of Mount Gambier would not have those additional benefits without an increase in the public service.

The message must be made clear. Force the Liberals to be specific and to name areas they will cut back. Then tell people.

No-one in the community should be under any illusion as to what that public service bashing attitude really means. The Labor Party has to make it clear to everyone in the community that such a policy would inevitably mean lower standards of government service and a lower standard of living for everyone.

We can expect that the Liberals will use that line with increasing frequency in the lead up to the State election.

It will be picked up, repeated and endorsed by the Liberal's newspaper and business allies. We should never let it go unchallenged or unexplained.

The next State election will be the first in South Australia's modern history to be fought on fair and equitable boundaries which put both parties on an equal footing. The Labor Party can be extremely proud that the objectives which it has worked for since the Party's formation at the end of the last century, and which have been opposed by the conservative forces in this State all the time, have at last been achieved.

The systems which actively discriminated against Labor in both the House of Assembly and the Legislative Council have been changed, to the point where our Constitution is now recognised as a democratic model.

Despite what the Liberal Party says, the method of determining the House of Assembly boundaries is the fairest in Australia, a fact publicly endorsed by Senator Steele Hall, among others.

What the Liberals are complaining about is that they now have to win Government fairly - they can never again control this State through a system which deprived two thirds of the citizens of equal democratic rights.

The Liberals dishonesty in electoral reform matters is typical of their tactics on so many other issues. They will distort any issue, smear any individual, tell any lie, if they think it will help their cause.

Let's take a couple of examples. The Liberal Party is trying to tell people that the rate of housing in South Australia has gone down, while costs are higher than in any other State. The facts - as borne out by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Commonwealth Bank - are that while the number of houses built each year in Australia has increased nationally by 14 percent since 1968, in South Australia the increase has been 86 percent - 6 times higher than the national average. Housing construction costs are the second lowest in Australia, and our houses are of much better standard.

The shopping hours issues typifies their lack of scruples. The Liberal policy will put up prices, cut back on the shopping hours available and will hurt the shopper tremendously - yet they portray themselves as trying to help consumers. They don't mention that they have three times used their Upper House majority to reject legislation which would have given the community more flexible, properly introduced shopping hours.

Because they have no positive policies, and because they don't have a constructive programme for the development of South Australia, the Liberal Party relies on manufacturing substance out of shadows, and then tries to ignore the real issues which are affecting South Australians.

They are now peddling the curious notion that while they could run an entire election campaign in 1975 on Federal issues which did not affect South Australia, the State Government cannot talk about the damage the Federal Government is doing to our State because that isn't a State matter.

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Through people who should be more perceptive they are trying to establish some sort of attitude that the next State election will be fought on purely Federal issues, and isn't this a terrible thing.

The next State election will not be like 1975, where Federal issues which affected only Canberra and which had no direct impact on our State were made dominant by the Liberals.

The forthcoming election will be fought on issues which affect the working and living conditions of South Australians and their families and the policies of the State Government which apply to them.

And with the Liberal Party's record of putting the interests of our State at the bottom of their list, the people will have the choice between a Government which sticks up for South Australia and an Opposition which puts loyalty to Malcolm Fraser ahead of loyalty to their own State.

The Liberal Party's attitude to unemployment is typical of how they will ignore the needs of South Australian workers and families because they are wedded to the economic stupidity of Mr. Fraser and Mr. Lynch.

Unemployment in Australia is already 5 percent of the workforce and is rising continually. Compared with a year ago, there are more than 62,000 more Australians out of work today, and the trend is that thousands more will lose their jobs this year.

The personal and community cost of this tragic situation is very high, and it is particularly devastating among our young people. Already there are signs that unemployment has caused increased juvenile crime and a higher incidence of mental disturbance among young people. But the impact of being thrown out of work for no other reason than the economic policies of the Federal Government is disastrous for any worker, regardless of age or occupation.

The South Australian Government has tried to help unemployed people to the limit of its resources. In the last 15 months we have spent \$17 million on giving people jobs which will benefit both the person and the community. Through local councils and government departments we have funded community projects which have given work to thousands of men and women.

This year alone, more than 3000 people have been given jobs under the State Unemployment Relief Scheme.

The scheme is to be expanded to cope with the growing number of people who are being thrown out of work by Mr. Fraser's government and on Friday I announced that an extra \$14.5 million would be made available. The extra money would make it possible to increase the number of people employed at any one time from 1100 to 1500, and would help ease the trauma of unemployment for more people.

Mr. Fraser has condemned unemployment relief schemes in the States and said they are contrary to Liberal economic policy. I challenged Dr. Tonkin to say where the local Liberals stood and he obliged.

In his own words on radio he described the move as "a waste of money". He is on tape as saying it, so he can't claim to be misquoted. He doesn't believe in giving people work and shares the views of Mr. Fraser that the unemployed should stay unemployed and not be helped.

Apparently the Liberals in South Australia don't want to see South Australians working and any move which helps families and which gives self respect and purpose back to unemployed people is, according to Dr. Tonkin, a waste of money.

I wonder whether the thousands of people who have jobs under our scheme would agree with that. I wonder whether the people who, after having worked with councils and departments on unemployment relief projects, were given permanent employment would agree that the projects were a waste of money.

Would the people who have been given new skills and new chances of employment agree that the scheme is a waste of money.

To be fair, what is Dr. Tonkin's method of helping the unemployed. Well, he doesn't have one, of course, apart from muttering about how South Australia's payroll tax is the highest in Australia. That is untrue - our payroll tax rates are the lowest in Australia, except for a marginally greater exemption for some companies in Queensland.

The Government has already offered payroll tax exemptions for employers in major country centres who expand their employment in new developments of more than five workers - and the Liberal Party has been complaining that not many have taken advantage of it.

All he can propose is that more should be done through the private sector. Someone should tell him that it is the private sector which is sacking the people we are trying to help, and heaven knows how the private sector

can help in that way when the Federal Government's policies are causing it to reduce employment.

Once again, when it came to the choice of standing up for South Australians or simply letting the Federal Government cause further damage in our State, the Liberals went on the side of the wreckers. They not only condone this, they encourage it.

In this case, they don't want to help the unemployed. Dr. Tonkin is obviously quite content to see unemployment climb, to see the dole queues get longer and to call people on those queues "dole bludgers", and to see more families distressed as a result of the Federal Government's actions.

As in so many areas, they are unable to look after South Australians. And that refusal to put South Australia first will become clearer to the people each day as our State, along with the other States, is still further harmed by Mr. Fraser.

The message we can give to the people of our State is quite clear - we are concerned about South Australia, we will fight for South Australians and we will put South Australia first all the time.