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A.L.P. BROADCAST 22ND APRIL, 1963

PRESENTED BY DON DUNSTAN - MEMBER FOR HORWOOD

Good Evening,

It is a sad reflection on the state of the present Federal Government that it takes the death of a Federal Labor member and a consequent by-election to accomplish for this State what valid agreement, reason, just claims and the unanimous vote of the House of Assembly could not.

During the lifetime of the Chifley Labor Government in Canberra a rail standardisation agreement was executed by the Commonwealth and the States. One of the vital steps in the progressive standardisation of rail gauges in Australia was the conversion of the line between Broken Hill and Port Pirie.

The claims of South Australia, however, counted little with the Menzies Government. Rail standardisation generally proceeded under them at a snail's pace, and in South Australia, after a small area in the South East had been dealt with, not at all.

Every so often the L.C.L. State Premier, seeking something else, would rattle his sword on the rail standardisation issue, but would go quietly when he got the small sop he was looking for at the time.

Labor demands in Canberra for the honouring of the rail standardisation agreement were airily dismissed by Sir Robert Menzies' minions.

Then Mr. O'Halloran, the then Leader of the A.L.P. in South Australia died. A by-election was held in his district. Through that district runs the Port Pirie-Broken Hill railway line.

In the week preceding polling day Sir Thomas announced at Peterborough that agreement to proceed with standardising the line would be completed within a fortnight. Headlines were published in the Adelaide News - 750 men would be promptly engaged to undertake the work. The site for railway workshops was discussed. All was in readiness for this great undertaking which would

affect the lives of so many of the constituents of Frome.

The by-election went by - and no more was heard. Agreement was not reached in a fortnight. 750 men were not engaged. That was in November, 1960. Now in April, 1963 2½ years later, works has still not commenced.

Shortly after the by-election Sir Thomas announced he was prepared to trade rail-standardisation for Commonwealth support for his Chowilla dam project, but he didn't get that either. After some taunting Sir Thomas commenced action in the High Court to enforce the rail standardisation agreement. The Commonwealth opposed it - and won - the Court decided that there was no clear time specified. The Labor Party at the Federal elections undertook to proceed with all haste to honour the spirit of the agreement and get on with the job. The Liberals said naught.

After the State elections last year, the Labor Party introduced a motion into the House of Assembly that it instruct the S.A. Senators as representatives of the State to move an amendment to the motion in the Senate that the budget papers be printed demanding action on standardising the gauge.

Sir Thomas found he could not get the matter put off - so decided that he would rather have the L.C.L. Senators embarrassed than be so himself, and he and his colleagues voted for Labor's motion.

The Labor <sup>Senators</sup> Senators obeyed the direction of the State Parliament. The L.C.L. Senators and all government senators in the Senate voted to defeat this State's demand that the project proceed. So only last year, a few short months ago, the Menzies Government refused to entertain early action for standardisation of the Port Pirie-Broken Hill gauge.

Ah, but when things are different they are not the same? Mr. Edgar Russell M.H.R. and a Labor man has died. There must be an election for his seat on June 1st and again through that electorate runs the Pirie-Broken Hill line. Presto - once again we have an announcement, once again by the Liberal Government whose working majority can be affected by the election, that work

on this great and vital project will commence without delay.

If the work on the gauge starts it will be a tribute to the way in which Labor, both State and Federal, has ~~pressed~~ this matter against the tardiness and unconcern of Sir Robert Menzies' Government. If it does not start - in view of the past record of the L.C.L. on this matter - can we really be surprised?