

The "New Times" is a really independent, non-party, non-class, non-sectarian weekly newspaper, advocating political and economic democracy, and opposing totalitarianism in all its forms.

Now, when our land to ruin's brink is verging, In God's name, let us speak while there is lime! Now, when the padlocks for our lips are forging, Silence is crime. —Whittier.

THE NEW TIMES

Vol. 13. No. 25. MELBOURNE, FRIDAY, JUNE 27, 1947

SUBSCRIPTION RATES
Our charges for supplying and posting the "New Times" direct to your home or elsewhere every week are as follows:—Three months, 5/-; Six months, 10/-; Twelve months, £1.
Payments must be made in advance and sent direct to New Times Limited, Box 1226, G.P.O., Melbourne.
(Registered Office: 343 Little Collins Street, Melbourne, C.I. Telephone: MU2834.)

ROAD BILL GIVES CANBERRA CONTROL OVER THE STATES

The Bureaucrats Move Again!

The Commonwealth Aid Roads And Works Bill 1947 is yet another attempt by the Canberra bureaucrats to centralise control and to extend their power over the States and municipal Councils.

This Bill arose from the position in which the local government authorities found themselves with regard to the repair and maintenance of their roads, after six years or more of enforced neglect. In some cases, extensive damage had been done to roads by military vehicles, and the Councils found themselves incapable of meeting the expenditure necessary to their repair.

It was pointed out during the debate on the Bill in the House of Representatives that the road system of New South Wales alone would require the expenditure of £45,000,000 to bring it up to a satisfactory standard. Labor costs for road work have increased by 40 per cent, materials by almost as much, new construction costs by 36 per cent, bridge building costs by 50 per cent, and the price of bitumen has increased from £7 a ton pre-war to £20 a ton today. The situation has been made quite hopeless, so far as the municipalities are concerned, by the fact that they cannot increase their revenue because property values have been pegged.

The States also have found themselves incapable of meeting this situation, mainly because of the encroachments upon their taxing powers by the Commonwealth Government. If the States were to levy taxes for this purpose, in addition to the exorbitant taxes already levied by the Commonwealth, there is every possibility that their actions would provoke hostility and aggravate the demand for abolition of State Parliaments.

The Fleecing of Motorists

It was also pointed out during the debate that, whereas during the early years of the Federal Aid Roads Grant, the whole of the money collected through petrol tax was spent on roads, only about 27 per cent, of the money collected by the tax is spent on roads at present. During the depression an additional impost of 4d a gallon placed on petrol, was used towards balancing the budget, and a further impost of 3½d had raised the tax on petrol to 11d a gallon. It was claimed that the petrol tax should be reduced, or that the grants to the States should be substantially increased.

Motor users pay £7,000,000 a year in licence fees, £12,000,000 a year in petrol tax and £4,000,000 a year in sales tax on the purchase of motor vehicles. By this means, the Commonwealth raises from motorists

through taxation, a total of £23,000,000, as compared with the £8,800,000 per annum which constitutes the net revenue of the railway services of Australia.

To help towards the gigantic task of making up the leeway in road construction and repair, the Commonwealth is to make available the munificent sum of £6,000,000—£4,500,000 on the construction and maintenance of roads, £1,000,000 on the construction of roads in sparsely populated areas, £500,000 for strategic and access roads to Commonwealth property, and £100,000 for the promotion of road safety principles and practices.

A Protest from Mr. Ryan

Seemingly our legislators at Canberra overlooked the fact that this Bill gives the Minister of Transport powers, which might lead to behavior not permitted by the Constitution. Mr. Ryan, however, went very near to this point when he said: "It [paragraph a of sub-clause 3 of clause 6] provides that the money is to be expended by the States in accordance with the policy agreed to by the Minister; in other words, the Minister is to assume control of general detail policy in relation to roads in any State. The Government has a craze for centralisation. On behalf of the State of Victoria and its people I protest vigorously against that provision. I consider that the money should be expended according to the wishes of the Government and the people of the State."

Later, Mr. Ryan said: "One would have thought that the Commonwealth Government would trust the States to expend money wisely on the development of the roads in sparsely settled districts, yet even in this connection, the approval of the Minister of Transport will have to be obtained. This will lead to centralisation in Canberra, and the bureaucracy which operates in this capital city will prevent the money from being expended by the States, who know best what is required for the development of their areas."

Mr. Ryan is to be congratulated upon his recognition of responsibility to his electors, which prompted him to speak in that manner in support of their needs, and in support of the State Governments; but his views regarding the States were evidently not shared by Mr. Corser. Mr. Corser was of the opinion that "the Government should make a direct contribution to the local authorities for this work."

The Constitutional Limit

Since we have made passing reference in this article to the Commonwealth Constitution, it might not be out of place for us to state, at this point, just what that much neglected and sorely strained document has to say on the matter. Section 99 reads: "The Commonwealth shall not, by any law or regulation of trade, commerce, or revenue, give preference to one State or any part thereof over another State or any part thereof."

Under the terms of that Section, the Minister of Transport would find himself on very sticky ground, if he attempted in any way to allocate monies for repairs to roads in any particular part of any State.

The farthest the Minister could go in laying down the manner in which grants for roads are to be spent, would be for him to lay down certain principles to be applied to all States, so as not to differentiate between States or parts of States. Perhaps Mr. Corser is not aware that the Constitution limits the powers of the Commonwealth in this manner, and possibly Mr. Ward, like many of his colleagues, doesn't much care about the sovereignty of the States, provided they do not bestir themselves in defence of their rights.

Domination of the States

In spite of the assurance given by Senator Armstrong, during the second reading of the Bill in the Senate, that there would be no interference with the States in matters of detail, the Bill gives very wide powers to the Minister in matters of policy.



MR. RYAN, M.H.R.

So wide are those powers that it will be surprising indeed if the bureaucrats who will administer them survive the temptation to proceed that additional step which will complete domination over the States by the Commonwealth in this particular matter. Whether that happens or not, it will be certain that, with the costs of the Federal bureaucracy added, road costs will increase, and construction be further delayed.

The responsibility on all those who wish to preserve and extend decentralisation, and smash the growing bureaucracy at Canberra, is to awaken Councillors and State Members to what is happening, and to write to their Commonwealth representatives, pointing out the dangers in this type of legislation and demanding that the lust for power by the Canberra bureaucrats shall be bridled and ultimately broken.

—H. ROBERTS.

NOTES ON THE NEWS

Press reports say that a determined bid for the abolition of Uniform Taxation is to be made. Mr. Dunstan, M.L.A., urges an immediate approach to the Privy Council to end what he describes as "a curse to Victoria." A recent survey indicated that all States favor restoration of their taxing powers.

However, it seems that Canberra is determined to maintain this master control, so maybe it will be necessary to invoke the aid of the Privy Council.

A lot of credit for the Victorian defeat of the tyrannical Economic Stability (Stalin model) Bill is due to the early exposures by Mr. Warner, M.L.C., and Mr. Dunstan, M.L.A.

URANIUM UPSET

The Federal Octopus is rather upset because the Premier of South Australia (Mr. Playford) refuses to hand over control of the uranium deposits at Mount Painter. Mr. Playford says that he and his Government have "neither the legal right nor the inclination to surrender the deposits to the Commonwealth."

Unlike other States, South Australia has no worthwhile black coal deposits; in these circumstances, assuming there is anything in the theory of harnessing uranium as a source of power, S.A. could be independent of N.S.W. This possibility would, of course,

upset the Planners, and would explain the big drive to obtain control. It is obvious that these deposits would be automatically at the disposal of the military authorities if war broke out; so the plea of "defence" is clearly a subterfuge.

TASMANIAN TRIUMPH

The little Isle of Tasmania has given a lead back to the path of sanity by abandoning building controls—and the result, according to the Premier (Mr. Cosgrove), is "highest housing production in the State's history." There is an open market for building materials, and all that is required from the prospective homebuilder is submission of plans to the local Municipal Council for approval.

That should interest the power-lusters whose jobs depend on maintaining controls!

If other States follow this lead and scrap building controls, production will increase at an amazing rate. There's not the slightest doubt that these and other controls obstruct our development. Well done, Tasmania!

PRICES PUZZLE

Here's an example of how crazy Price-Fixing bleeds the workers:

Adelaide wholesale manufacturers of men's suits have their selling price fixed at 66/-, while Melbourne prices are 90/-.

The retailer is allowed a certain rate percent, of profit on the purchase price; so, the higher the wholesale price, the greater the profit—and it's legal! Obviously, retailers under this price-fixing prefer to buy at the highest price, which is the complete reversal of normal sane practice. It's certainly crazy and, of course, the wholesaler with the lowest fixed price is at a disadvantage.

Apart from the unconstitutional aspect of discrimination between States, workers and others have to foot the bill and have to pay the higher prices caused by the Price-Fixers eliminating competition.

SOCIALIST SERFDOM

At the recent British Labor Conference, party leaders had to face up to strong criticism of their failure to deliver the goods, or to alleviate the lot of the workers.

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Significant Political Pointers

The price of "saving" Europe from Communism is to be the complete domination of Europe by the German-Jewish International Financiers whose headquarters are Wall Street, New York.

Can it be possible that the German-Jewish Financiers knew what they were about when they helped to finance the Russian Revolution?

It was the same gangsters who helped Hitler to power. In the war to defeat Hitler these gangsters advanced their policy of trying to destroy the British Empire.

Their major strategy, to obtain complete world domination, is to arrange a permanent threat to world peace and invite the peoples of the world to surrender to their control in order to avert further military war.

THE DOLLAR DILEMMA

The following revealing comment on the economic situation in America is given by a Special Correspondent in the English "Observer" of May 25:

"... The United States has made an almost miraculously good job of its industrial reconversion. Now that the country has been free of serious labor troubles for some weeks the U.S. industrial giant is in his full stride again. He showed us what he could do during the war when he put forth his immense war effort without having to cut at all into the level of production for civilian consumption. But during the war the problem of getting rid of the surplus provided no difficulty. It was given away under Lend-Lease.

"Today we are back to more normal techniques, and though some of the stuff is still

being given away it is only a small trickle of the vast flow of U.S. exports. These reached a record figure of \$4900 million for the first quarter of 1947, against which the U.S. took only \$1900 million of imports from the rest of the world. Therefore, signs of saturation are beginning to reappear in the American domestic scene. The shops are full again; the pipelines between manufacturers and retailers are filling up fast; some industries, among them woollen textile mills, are beginning to work short time.

"And all the while the world's supply of dollars is running down at a much faster rate than new American foreign loans are being made. What will happen when the dollars run out? ..."

Obviously huge dollar loans will be poured into Europe and other parts of the world in order that American "surpluses" can be exported. The loans will be advanced against the assets of the countries to which the loans are made.

In a sane world international trade would be a free exchange of genuine surpluses between the peoples of the various nations.

The nations of the British Empire could set the necessary example if they put the future of the British Empire before the plans of international plotters.

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PREMIER PLAYFORD

