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Title:
Radio talk for 5KA by Don Dunstan - Chowilla

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RADIO TALK FOR 5-KA

221
BY DON DUNSTAN

SUBJECT: CHOWILLA

BROADCAST 8/4/70

GOOD EVENING: WELL, WE'VE HAD QUITE A DRAMATIC TIME IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA OVER THE LAST FEW DAYS. "THE GOVERNMENT", AS SOMEONE SAID, HAS "LAID ITS FUTURE ON THE LINE OVER THE DARTMOUTH DAM". AND WE IN THE LABOR PARTY HAVE HAD TO EXPLAIN OUR POSITION ON CHOWILLA. FOR THE PUBLIC, IF THEY WERE NOT TOO CONFUSED, IT MUST SEEM THAT ALL THE OLD GAMES ARE BEING PLAYED AGAIN.

WELL I THINK THERE'S ONE THING THAT WE WOULD LIKE TO SAY STRAIGHT OFF. THE LABOR PARTY IS NOT PLAYING GAMES. THIS IS NOT JUST PARTY POLITICS. WE NEED WATER IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA - GOOD, CLEAN, GUARANTEED WATER. AND THAT IS REALLY WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT. WE BELIEVE THAT THE L.C.L. GOVERNMENT BY PROCEEDING WITH ITS PRESENT PLANS TO CHANGE THE RIVER MURRAY WATERS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE GUARANTEEING TO SOUTH AUSTRALIA FUTURE QUALITY WATER SUPPLIES.

THE RIVER MURRAY SYSTEM IS OUR ONE MAJOR SOURCE OF WATER. IT GIVES US 85 PER CENT OF OUR SUPPLY, BUT THE TROUBLE IS THAT WE'RE RIGHT AT THE BOTTOM OF THE SYSTEM. IF YOU LOOK AT THE MAP OF THE WATER USAGE IN VICTORIA AND NEW SOUTH WALES YOU'LL SEE WHAT WE MEAN. THERE ARE QUITE MASSIVE IRRIGATION SETTLEMENTS IN VICTORIA AND NEW SOUTH WALES; THEY COULD SWALLOW UP OUR OWN IRRIGATION SETTLEMENTS A SCORE OF TIMES.

NOW THE FACT IS THAT THIS ENORMOUS CONCENTRATION OF IRRIGATION CREATES CONTINUAL QUALITY PROBLEMS IN THE RIVER DOWNSTREAM IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA. AFTER HUNDREDS OF VICTORIAN AND NEW SOUTH WELSH ORCHARDS AND VINEYARDS HAVE BEEN WATERED, THEIR SALTY DRAINAGE IS LET RUN BACK. AND THEN ON THE TRIBUTARIES, OUTSIDE THE AREAS CONTROLLED BY THE RIVER MURRAY COMMISSION, THE AMOUNT OF WATER USED IS QUITE UNCONTROLLED. AND THAT IS WHY WE, AT THE BOTTOM END OF THE SYSTEM, ARE QUITE OFTEN FORCED TO ACCEPT POOR QUALITY WATER.

THE CHOWILLA DAM WAS DESIGNED TO DO TWO THINGS - GIVE US A GUARANTEED WATER SUPPLY, AND PROTECT US FROM SUCH POLLUTION RIGHT ON OUR OWN DOOR STEP ABOVE RENMARK AND BELOW VICTORIAN AND NEW SOUTH WELSH IRRIGATION WORKS. IT WOULD HAVE GIVEN THE WHOLE STATE GREATER WATER PROTECTION THAN IT HAS EVER KNOWN. IT WASN'T CHEAP. WE GAVE UP OUR RIGHTS IN THE SNOWY MOUNTAINS DIVERSION SCHEME IN ORDER TO GET SUCH PROTECTION FROM CHOWILLA. THE SNOWY MOUNTAINS SCHEME BENEFITED VICTORIA AND NEW SOUTH WALES. SOUTH AUSTRALIANS PAID TAXES FOR IT. CHOWILLA WAS OUR PART OF THE BARGAIN, AND IT IS AT THE MOMENT LEGALLY ENFORCEABLE.

AND WHAT HAS HAPPENED NOW? FOR FINANCIAL AND POLITICAL REASONS OF THEIR OWN THE GORTON GOVERNMENT, THE VICTORIAN AND NEW SOUTH WALES GOVERNMENTS, AND THE L.C.L. GOVERNMENT IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA WANT US TO GIVE UP OUR RIGHTS TO CHOWILLA. IN RETURN WE ARE OFFERED A DAM AT DARTMOUTH PLUS AN ANNUAL ENTITLEMENT TO WATER INCREASED FROM 1¼ M. ACRE FEET TO 1½M. ACRE FEET. BUT THAT IS JUST WORDS. SOME YEARS UP TO 8½M. ACRE FEET - WAY ABOVE OUR ENTITLEMENT - FLOWS THROUGH THE STATE TO THE SEA. CHOWILLA WOULD STORE MUCH OF THAT WATER. OTHER YEARS WE DON'T EVEN GET OUR PRESENT ENTITLEMENT OF 1¼M. ACRE FEET AND IF THE WATER ISN'T THERE, IT ISN'T THERE. WE CAN ONLY SHARE WHAT IS AVAILABLE.

BUT PERHAPS THE MOST DISTINCTIVE THING ABOUT THE DARTMOUTH DAM IS THAT IT'S SO FAR AWAY. IT'S SOME SIXTY MILES UP RIVER FROM THE HUME DAM, ON A SLOW-FLOWING RIVER CALLED THE MITTA MITTA. LOOK AT THE MAP AND YOU'LL SEE HOW FAR AWAY IT IS - A GOOD ONE THOUSAND RIVER MILES, OR SIX WEEKS OF FLOW IF WATER IS RELEASED. THE MITTA MITTA WILL TAKE SIX WINTERS TO FILL THE PROPOSED DAM, SO WE CANNOT EXPECT EXTRA WATER UNTIL 1980.

BUT LET US MAKE OUR POSITION CLEAR. WE DO NOT SAY THAT THERE CANNOT BE ANY BENEFITS TO THE WHOLE MURRAY SYSTEM IN HAVING ADDITIONAL STORAGES AT DARTMOUTH, OR SOMEWHERE ELSE, ON THE UPPER RIVER. THERE CAN BE BENEFITS. BUT SUCH BENEFITS SHOULD NOT COME AT THE EXPENSE OF THE CHOWILLA DAM AND THE PROTECTION IT COULD GIVE TO SOUTH AUSTRALIA IN WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY.

UNFORTUNATELY THAT IS THE EXPENSE THE L.C.L. GOVERNMENT IS ASKING PARLIAMENT TO SUPPORT. IT WANTS PARLIAMENT TO SUPPORT A BINDING AGREEMENT WHICH PROVIDES FOR THE BUILDING OF DARTMOUTH AND THE COMPLETE WIPING OUT OF THE IDEA OF CHOWILLA. IT STILL OCCASIONALLY SAYS CHOWILLA IS A VIABLE PROJECT AND SHOULD BE THE NEXT DAM. BUT LOOK AT THE AGREEMENT THEY WANT PARLIAMENT TO RATIFY. CLAUSE 13 SAYS "COMPLETION OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE CHOWILLA RESERVOIR SHALL BE DEFERRED UNTIL THE CONTRACTING GOVERNMENTS AGREE THAT THE WORK SHALL PROCEED". THAT MEANS THAT BOLTE, ASKIN AND GORTON WOULD RECEIVE AN INDIVIDUAL AND PERMANENT VETO ON CHOWILLA. IT LEAVES SOUTH AUSTRALIA WITHOUT ANY LEGAL RIGHTS AT ALL.

ANOTHER CLEAR INDICATION THAT THE PROTECTION CHOWILLA WAS TO GIVE US IS TO BE THROWN AWAY CAN BE SEEN IN YET ANOTHER CLAUSE TO BE INSERTED INTO THE AGREEMENT. THIS WILL PROVIDE FOR NEW INLET AND OUTLET WORKS AT LAKE VICTORIA. THEY'LL COST \$7 M. NOW WILL, FOR INSTANCE, SIR HENRY BOLTE AGREE TO CHOWILLA IN THE FUTURE, AFTER DARTMOUTH IS BUILT, IF THESE WORKS AT LAKE VICTORIA ARE TO BE FLOODED IN THE CHOWILLA SCHEME, AS THEY WILL BE? OF COURSE HE WON'T.

THERE IS ONLY ONE CONCLUSION TO COME TO. IT IS OBVIOUSLY INTENDED FROM WHAT HAS BEEN ARRANGED BY THESE INTERSTATE GOVERNMENTS THAT CHOWILLA WILL NEVER BE BUILT. THE TWO NEW CLAUSES THE L.C.L. GOVERNMENT WANTS THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT TO RATIFY MEAN THE END OF CHOWILLA AND THE END OF SAFETY FOR US IN WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY.

WELL, IN THE LABOR PARTY WE'RE NOT DAM BUSTERS.
WE DON'T CHUCK CHOWILLA. WE SAY THAT THIS STATE CAN GET
A DAM LIKE DARTMOUTH WITHOUT SELLING OFF OUR RIGHTS TO
CHOWILLA. THE AGREEMENT MUST BE - CAN BE - AMENDED.
THE STATE CANNOT AFFORD TO HAVE POLLUTED, SALTY WATER
COMING DOWN. THE LABOR PARTY WON'T VOTE FOR THE RATIFICATION
OF AN AGREEMENT THAT SAYS WE CAN GET A BIGGER SHARE OF
WATER THAT AT TIMES MIGHT NOT BE THERE - PROVIDING CHOWILLA
IS FORGOTTEN. BEFORE IT'S CHANGE-OF-HEART THE PRESENT
GOVERNMENT CALLED CHOWILLA "SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S LIFE LINE".
IT IS STILL JUST THAT TO ALL OF US NOW.

GOOD NIGHT.