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Title:

Press statement: Premiers' Conferences

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PRESS STATEMENT BY THE PREMIER OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA, DON DUNSTAN

17/6/71 SUBJECT: PREMIERS' CONFERENCES

The Premier of South Australia (Mr Dunstan) today attacked the present form of Commonwealth-State conferences at Premier level, describing them as "expensive junkets for counter-productive wrangling".

He said that over the past five years of so Premiers' Conferences had deteriorated so drastically that they now amounted to no more than endless and inconclusive clashes between the States and the Commonwealth over the allocation or not of monies for what, by and large, everyone agreed were essential projects.

He said that it appeared there would be no end to this situation in which the States received on the one hand sympathy from the Commonwealth and on the other "politico-economic double-think handed down as if from Big Brother".

"Yesterday the Premiers were initially presented with a growth tax scheme which was nothing more than a thimble and pea game, without the pea".

"I do not believe we were presented with financial measures that indicated the kind of National planning and leadership this country desperately needs."

"The Premiers ended up, once more, in secret session in the Cabinet Room digging their collective heels in (perhaps for the first time for some years) in an effort to keep this federation of States a financially and politically viable concept".

"The Australian Federal system just will not survive such consistent bad economic and political management".

"We are now suffering from two decades worth of piece-meal, stop-gap, on-off policies that have left the Nation without a total development programme, National objectives, or even a simple sense of purpose".

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"Every thinking person in Australia knows that the States have insufficient funds for vital social services like schools, health and hospitals, or public works like power and sewerage, or environmental works such as urban planning and redevelopment".

"In the rarified and affluent atmosphere of Canberra the actual problems of the people in the States and the cities are being conveniently forgotten".

"This is because the one anti-inflationary measure the Commonwealth could use to raise the funds needed to cover State deficits and future expenditures is an increase in taxes on higher income earners".

"It is the obvious solution, but it is not one the Commonwealth is happy with because it strikes at the hip pocket nerve of affluent Liberal voters".

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