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LT-COL GOODWIN'S POLICY

FAVOURS REFORM OF COUNCIL

TOO MUCH REPRESENTATION FOR ONE DEPARTMENT

BROAD POLICY FOR CANBERRA'S GOOD

In a broadcast address last night, Lt Col JTH Goodwin outlined his policy in the Advisory Council election campaign. At the conclusion of a general survey of requirements of the Territory, Col Goodwin said that he would support any movement which had for its ends:-

- The provision of the maximum employment to residents of the Territory;
- A programme of an independent committee to report on the general condition of the relief workers and their children, and the question of eliminating arrears in rent;
- The granting of pensions to widows;
- The early commencement of the building of the Government Offices;
- The establishment of a technical school of high standard and the provision for scholarships;
- The building of a high school and also a new hospital: and
- Any movement for the advancement of Canberra and its people.

At the outset, Col Goodwin asked how a candidate for election to a council which has no power to either legislate or administer could formulate a policy.

'The Advisory Council is purely a council to advise to the Minister for the Interior who pleases himself whether he accepts or rejects it,' he said. 'In short, the passing of any resolution may have no other effect than to give satisfaction to the mover who was fortunate enough to pilot it through this very one-sided Council, for one-sided it certainly is, consisting as it does of three nominated members from the same department, three members elected by the people and a chairman nominated by the Minister for the Interior.

The Council in my opinion would be much stronger, more independent, and more representative if the three nominated councillors were not members of the same department, and subject to the same permanent head and Minister.

It is not at all necessary for purposes of the Council that the three nominated members should be directly connected with the administration of the Territory.

If the Council desires the presence of any departmental officers it has the privilege of requesting that he shall attend and supply the information desired.

I am not attacking any of the nominated members, but am only pointing out the weakness of the Council as at present constituted.

I do not know how the resolutions of the Council are placed before the Minister, but I do know enough of official procedure to be aware that a Minister's decision often depends very much on how the question is placed before him. I am strongly of the opinion that the resolutions of the Council would receive more attention if they were presented to the Minister by the Chairman, who might be accompanied by any member of the Council who wished to attend. Surely it is not too much to ask that the Minister in charge of the Territory shall devote a few hours every month to consult with his Advisory Council.

Some drastic reform in the present procedure of conveying the resolution of the Council to the Minister appears to be absolutely necessary if the Council is to be of any service to the people and it should be the recognised medium of placing before the Government the wishes of the residents of the Territory.

I regard the Advisory Council as the forerunner of the Council clothed with all the power and dignity of a truly Legislative body representative of the people, and to that end I shall always strive and trust that whoever the elected members may be they will work to that end.

During my term of office as a member of the Council I have endeavoured to further the advancement of Canberra and the interests of the people of the Territory and was always available to those who wished to consult me on any matter.

When Canberra has been developed to the fullest extent necessary for the complete transfer of the departments it will more than pay interest on all expenditure,' declared the speaker.

'No business corporation would attempt to develop any place in the half-baked, half-hearted manner to which we have now grown accustomed.

One day the people of Australia will wake up and demand the completion of the transfer of the departments so that Canberra may give a return for the money spent on it and truly take its place as the National Capital.

One of the first works should be the building of the Government offices on the foundations which were laid down years ago for them. This work would take three or four years to complete, and the building of the necessary residences should be coincident with the progress of the building.

TECHNICAL AND HIGH SCHOOLS

A Technical School is urgently required so that the youth of Canberra might receive training to fit themselves for the battle of life, and the erection of a High School in the immediate future seems absolutely necessary.

NEW HOSPITAL

The present Hospital building should not be allowed to remain one moment longer than can be helped as it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to administer it efficiently in an economic manner.

We are only just emerging from a great financial depression, and it is still necessary to carefully control our expenditure, but there does not appear now to be any reason why useful works could not now be proceeded with.

FOREST PLANTING

The extension of forest planting in suitable localities and the improvement of some of our country roads would give employment to a number of men and serve a useful purpose. Preparations for planting forests and road making could be continued all the year.

It is true that commercial timber cannot be grown anywhere, but even in the Territory we have thousands of acres which would yield more under forest conditions and employ more men than in any other way, and it would pay to remove the useless timber from it and replace it by a marketable sort, whereas it would not pay to clear the same land for grazing and agriculture.

THE EMPLOYMENT PROBLEM

We have in Canberra somewhere between 600 and 700 men dependent on relief work, two thirds of whom are married, gradually sinking down to the very depths of poverty and striving to rear children on an income of from a third to half of the basic wage. Occasionally, they get constant work for a few short weeks, during which time all sorts of deductions are made from their pay so that at the end of the time they are no better off than at the beginning.

ARREARS OF RENT

The Government should appoint a committee to go into the matter of the arrears of rent etc for workers' houses, with a view of finding out how much could equitably be written off, and whether some further reductions could not be made. I understand that there is an amount of about 10,000 pounds owing in back rent by workmen and about the same amount is owing to business people. The Government makes deduction's from men's pay whenever they can, consequently there is nothing left for the unfortunate business man.

That there must be losses is certain as the unemployment has lasted so long that the load is greater than the men can bear, or can ever pay off in full. The businessman has to make concessions and so must the

Government. The sooner this matter is taken in hand, and the worker put into a better frame of mind with some hope of bringing up his children properly, the better for everyone.

The question of unemployed or partly employed youths is also a question which should at once be attacked seriously, and something done to prevent these young fellows from becoming useless and unemployable. They are all good lads, and only require some chance given them to make good citizens.

It is also a fact that many young children are not being properly fed, partly because of ignorance and partly because of poverty. It is the duty of the Government to counteract these evils without delay.

LEASEHOLD SYSTEM

The present system of disposing of the city lands has proved unattractive to the private investor, and the cost of building is such that investors will not build houses for letting purposes.

The closer any leasehold system is to freehold the more successful it will be. Under the present system the Government retain all the potential value and right to the improvements existing on the land at the termination of the lease, and the right to re-assess the rent at certain periods during the lease.

Until the leaseholder has tenant rights to his improvements and some interest in the potential value, there will be relatively little private money invested in building residences in Canberra.

Let the Government lease the lands at lower rentals, forego the right to reappraise the rental during the term, certain of the lease and give tenants rights to the improvements, then there would be a chance of private investors paying some attention to Canberra.

THE RURAL LEASES

The development of country lands are retarded for similar reasons. Improvements are not being effected to the same extent as under freehold and never will be until it is learnt how to create lease conditions which will encourage and not retard development.

The essentials to make lease conditions really satisfactory are:

- Security of tenure.
- Freedom of action.
- Reasonable rentals.
- Tenant rights to all improvements.
- Rights of appeal to an independent land court in regard to rates and reappraisalment.

The building of a city and the settlement of its surrounding lands on a purely leasehold tenure is an experiment in which we have had very little experience. The Britisher has for ages been accustomed to a freehold tenure and Australia has been settled largely under conditions which eventually entitled the settler to freehold. The Crown has generously only retained the right to minerals and to resume land for public purposes subject to compensation on the value of the land at the time of redemption.

FUTURE LAND TENURE

I am inclined to think that eventually Canberra lands will be disposed of under conditions which after certain improvements shall have been made to give the individual either a freehold or lease so close to a freehold that there will be little difference.

Land, like light and air, is the heritage of the people, and the accumulation of huge estates must be guarded against at all costs, and it is certainly easier to do this under some form of freehold, but the lease must be under such conditions that the leaseholder will reap the fruits of his labour, and know he is working for his family and not for a landlord who leaves him with nothing but a bare existence.