
Sir Richard Layton BUTLER

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Biographical note

Richard, one of nine children of Richard and Helena Kate nee Layton, was born on 31st March, 1885 near Yattalunga (near Gawler) in South Australia. He attended the Mallala State School and later the Adelaide Agricultural College. After completing his education he became a grazier at Kapunda and Balaklava. In 1908 he married Maude Isobel Draper and they had two children.

Butler's political career started as young Liberal Union member. He was elected to the House of Assembly for the seat of Wooroora in 1915. In the 1927 election the Liberal Party won office and Butler becomes Premier, Treasurer and Minister of Railways till 1930 Which followed his fathers, Sir Richard Butler, footsteps.

He regained the Premiership in 1933, where he remained until 1938. In this time period he was also Treasurer and Minister of Immigration. His main contribution to South Australia was his excellent administrative and financial abilities which laid the foundation for the State's secondary industry expansion.

On the 3rd of November, 1938 he resigned as Premier of South Australia to enter Federal Politics. He failed in his bid for the Federal seat of Wakefield and this failure was to be the end of his political career.

Before and during his political career, Butler was Managing Director of the Farmers Bulk Grain Co-op from 1918-1938. When his political career ended Butler was to become Director of several Companies and Boards. In 1939 he became the director for the Adelaide Electric Supply Board and then continued as a Member of the board when it became the Electricity Trust of South Australia in 1963.

During and after WWII he was Director of the Adelaide Cement Co. Ltd. and of the Emergency Road Transport of South Australia. Later he became Director of Cellulose (Australia) Ltd. and Chairman of the Commonwealth Liquid Fuel Control Board.

In 1939, Butler was knighted with the Knight Commander of the Order of St. Michael and St. George (KCMG). Sir Richard Layton Butler died at the age of 81 on 21st of January, 1966 of cerebro-vascular disease at Calvary hospital. After a state funeral he was buried in the Evergreen Memorial Park cemetery, Enfield. He was survived by his wife and two children.

SOURCES

1. The Advertiser, 22nd January, 1966.
2. A Handbook of Australian Government and Politics 1890-1964. (1968) Canberra, Australian National University Press, pp.207- 208.
3. Australian Dictionary of Biography. (1979) Victoria, Melbourne University Press, Vol. 7, pp.506-508.
4. The Australian Encyclopaedia. (1963) Sydney, Grolier Society of Australia, Vol. 11, p.224,
5. The Australian Encyclopaedia. (1977) 4th ed., Sydney, Grolier Society of Australia, p.146.