

**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE RT. HON.
R.G. MENZIES AT THE OPENING OF EDGEELL'S &
SONS LTD. BUILDING, FRIDAY 21ST AUGUST, 1959**

Sir, - I always begin by saying "Sir" because like my friend Mr. Kelly I find that if I don't, I am bound to forget somebody - the first thing I want to establish with you is a feeling of sympathy for me, because when I have said a few words to you I have to press a button - it's here. I take it for granted that in an efficient industry of this kind it will work. (Laughter) When one presses a button at Canberra the "Division bells" ring, (Laughter) but on this occasion something else will happen which will celebrate the opening of the two buildings.

Now the first thing that I want to say is of a somewhat frivolous kind, I fear, but I've heard about baby foods for half a day now. The room appears to be heavily lined with them. Whenever I see my wife sitting with her growing band of small grandchildren I find her scooping mysterious messes out of tins and putting them into the unsuspecting mouth of the little child, and I gather from all this, that this really does the trick. In fact, Mr. Edgell, the second Mr. Edgell, I thought, got in a piece of pretty smart advertising about these baby foods. Everybody nodded, except my friend Ross down there, who is a competitor and who seemed to me to have a slight attack of the palsy at that moment. (Laughter)

But what I want to say to you is this: Have a good look at Gus Kelly, and then have a good look at Tony Luchetti. Also have a good look at me. Do you know we didn't have any of these baby foods when we were young. (Laughter) Think of what is going to happen to the next generation: They will be a race of giants and that is, of course, nation-building in literally a big way.

Sir, there are two aspects of the economic development of our country which I think are sometimes overlooked and are worth mentioning on an occasion like this.

The first of them is that we have not yet, I think, taken sufficient pride in the romantic stories of achievement by men who began something new, who took all the risks, who had the spirit of enterprise and who finally built up something great and useful. Here we have today a perfect example of it in the case of the Edgell Enterprises. Mr. Edgell, the Chairman, I thought, spoke with proper pride, but with some little modesty about his own contribution to this matter. Who would have supposed in 1926 that anything like this could have occurred, not only here, but elsewhere in Australia. Nobody would have dreamed of it. When he spoke to you about "canning" and the development of "canning" and the early stages of it, he might very well, but for his modesty, have told you that he, with what today would appear to be a very modest sum of money, after the first world war, went over with, in effect, his gratuity, his allowances, and began to work in canning factories in the United States, so that he might learn himself, through his own hands and through his own mind what ought to be done about it.

Now this is something that exhibits courage and imagination and as a family enterprise it has found every unit in it filled with the same spirit. And here today I have the great honour, and my wife has the great honour, of being here at an opening which marks another big step in the history of an enterprise which is already, of course, a household name in Australia. We want to be proud of these things. I never did manage to get very much respect in my mind for some man who, by a process of speculation, lucky or otherwise, made a vast fortune, but I have an unqualified admiration for people who have been constructive, who have built up great things in Australia. Look what this family history has done for this delightful city of Bathurst, for this district, for this State.

One could point to a dozen instances just like that of similar developments in other branches of industry, beginning with nothing,

except a high spirit, plenty of intelligence, plenty of imagination and unlimited determination and we, who are the beneficiaries to these things, ought to acknowledge that benefit, I think, and treat such development with the respect that they are entitled to. They are indeed characteristic of Australian history and nobody can ever understand the economic growth of this country unless he goes and seeks to understand the life story and the life endeavours of human beings. Now that I think is something that I hope gives you pride; it invariably gives me both pride and pleasure. There is plenty of room in this country, thank God, for young people of enterprise, plenty of doors to be opened and plenty of achievements to be made.

The other aspect of our economic history which comes within the span of my own lifetime is this: it isn't so long ago that it was the accepted theory that there was some inevitable conflict between the interests of the man on the land and the interests of the manufacturer. We were told when I was a boy that either you were in favour of secondary industry or you were in favour of the farmer and you couldn't be in favour of both. This sorry nonsense has been long since disproved, but never could it be more eloquently disproved than on an occasion of this kind, because, you see, the great significance of today is that the man who grows things - whether it is asparagus or green peas, or carrots, or whatever it may be - finds himself able to dispose of those things quite nearby home to a processing works which is a secondary industry and which has the enormous advantage of getting its materials at the source and fresh and good. At the same time it gives to him a steady market and a growing market for what he produces. And right next to it is the factory of Containers Ltd., a factory of a kind which one would normally, years ago, have expected to find in a city and nowhere else. But here it is, cheek by jowl with this one, so that we have pure secondary industry, a food processing industry and the growing industry of the country, all brought together into one compass. This is the most eloquent proof that the old idea of inevitable division was a false one.

For myself I am very delighted because I stood, not in this room of course, but in one of the others, a long time ago - somebody told me and I hope it isn't true, that it was 19 years ago - and there was no hint of a can-making factory at that time. There was no hint of this enormous expansion. I looked at it as something of great interest, something rather odd to find in, what I hope I may say with respect is, a provincial City, not one of the great cities of the metropolis, and yet this growth has gone on. Now that, again, is a matter of immense satisfaction.

But there are other causes for our satisfaction today. I began by some light-hearted remarks, at least I intended them to be light-hearted, about baby foods. Now my wife, naturally - it's inevitable in the course of nature - understands more about babies than I do, and she has had a fair experience of them, including as I said now, some grandchildren - half a dozen of them - and she has travelled a great deal, not only over the length and breadth of this country but around a good deal of the world and she made a very good point to me today as we were walking about. She said: "You know, when you consider the hardships, the difficulties that so many hundreds of thousands, or perhaps millions of young mothers put up with in the past, unable perhaps by reason of where they lived or the circumstances or transport, to get the fresh food that they would require, what a wonderful thing it has been for mankind that this food processing industry should have shown such a phenomenal growth in recent times: food that can be relied on, food that lasts, food that can be transported with ease. These are wonderful things for people to be able to get".

I have been through one or two great food processing establishments in Australia and again I have a great pride in them, because they have the highest possible standard, not only of business efficiency but of cleanliness and of quality and the result is, that whereas at one stage earlier in my life people had a certain reluctance, perhaps about some types of canned food, today it has become the commonplace of life. And as the pressure of life increases so will

the demand for goods of quality available in a proper condition be bound to rise.

My friend, Mr. Kelly, who has had a lot of activity in these matters referred to the problem of decentralization. Decentralization is a first-class ideal. It is, indeed, expressing it broadly, essential - but it is extraordinarily difficult. You cannot decentralize an industry merely by passing an Act of Parliament, merely by pronouncing a Government policy, merely by some personal or public advocacy, because in the long run the hard economics of industry will have a profound effect on where that industry is to go. Consequently, one doesn't expect to find a great steel works hundreds of miles away from the source of its iron and its coal. One doesn't expect to find heavy industries in which the handling of products becomes a matter of extraordinary cost, establishing themselves miles away from the neighbourhood of the resources that they need. The great thing to aim at in decentralization is to consider always whether the nature of the industry is of such a kind that it lends itself to encouragement and development outside the city areas. Here we have, once more, a splendid example.

And, of course, the economic advantages are not confined to those that may be worked out for you by an Accountant in black and white. There are other advantages. There is one in the case of these works. I am perfectly certain, that is the spirit of local pride and of local teamwork that can exist between the employer and the employed. That is not so common in a big city where business tends to be impersonal, where the man lives in one place and works in another, and it's a day's work. It must be extremely difficult under those circumstances to develop this local pride which does produce efficiency, which does produce a good understanding, and which does produce productivity of the highest kind. But you get it in a place like this, and in an enterprise like this. That, I think, is something which is genuinely an economic advantage, though it may never be capable of being expressed in a £ s and d tabulation.

I was delighted, today, when I heard Mr. H.G. Edgell pay that tribute to the people who had worked on the construction of the machines being used in there. He wasn't employing a form of words, you noticed; he spoke with genuine feeling; he was enthusiastic about it; he knew that he had a team of people and that they were working as a team. And I believe, Sir, that in the long run as we become wiser and wiser on these matters, if not you and I, at least our successors, are bound to become wiser and wiser, even Mr. Luchetti's successor if he ever has one (Laughter) may turn out to be wiser and wiser. But as we all improve, we and our successors, will, I believe, discover more and more that the true future of Australia, as a producer, as an exporter, as a competitor in the world, is going to depend more and more upon genuine co-operation and enthusiasm and understanding in the fields of employment, so that everybody who works in an enterprise has some feeling of pride in what it is producing, a pride in what it is doing for his town and for his district and is therefore not an unwilling servant, but a willing co-operator in the task. And that spirit, I detect in this place, on all sides, and I thought it was admirably expressed, as I've said, by Mr. Edgell.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, you've had a bit of a burst of speech-making today and I'm going to desist, - I satisfy myself by saying that it has given me uncommon pleasure to come up here today, to have a look at what goes on, to meet some of my old friends and to meet new ones, in particular the Mayor, who has been most courteous and gracious to us today. And having said that I will now perform the final act, that is to say - and don't hold me blameworthy if it doesn't come off - this will be one thing you can't blame me for - (Laughter) I now declare these buildings open and I press the button.
