

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE RT. HON. R.
G. MENZIES AT THE CHAMBER OF MANUFACTURES
DINNER IN SYDNEY ON THURSDAY, 15TH SEPTEMBER,
1960

Sir:

I am delighted to be here in such delightfully mixed company at the top table. I say nothing of the rest of you who, after all, are paying for us, but I must say I've never seen you look more relaxed or more human.

The first time I ever attended a dinner of the Chamber in this place, in which I felt instinctively as I looked around, "After all, they are all human beings" (Laughter) - Rather a pleasant sensation.

But up here, of course, we're a mixed grill: I have Dr. Heffron (Laughter) my old friend. We both became Doctors on the one day, did you know that? Of course not: you're very ill informed. You are so busy attacking the Government that you have no time for more interesting matters. (Laughter)

Bob Heffron and I became Doctors on the one day - he a Doctor of Letters, not including letters to the Sydney Morning Herald (Laughter) - and I a Doctor of Law.

And also we have at the top table if I may make a brief selection, my distinguished telegenic friend, Arthur Calwell (Laughter, Applause) who has torn himself away from his television fans (Laughter) for this night only, bringing with him his Deputy, Gough Whitlam. He's here somewhere - tall, good-looking fellow. They always have to travel together otherwise they might disagree. (Laughter)

So that we at the top table here - very properly - are the dead heads tonight and you, thank Heaven, are the contributors. Judging by the Company reports that I have been reading, you can jolly well afford to entertain us (Laughter) at dinner.

Now I've been tricked tonight. In the past what has happened has been this: I've been about number five on the list and somebody has got up and made a most offensive speech about me which has increased my blood pressure to such a point that it has become normal. And then I've sort of fought my way out.

And tonight some low cunning - I think it must be the new secretary - some low cunning has been exercised and I have to break the ice. I go first. I can't feed on the crumbs that fall from the poor man's table. I have to go first and break it up. And I have to say something, I believe, about Australian industry.

Now, Sir, this is a most interesting title because I can remember - young as I am - I can remember a time when the toast would be "Australian manufacturing" or, in another setting, "The Wool industry", or, in another setting, "The Wheat Industry" according to where you were, and the particular political circumstances in which you found yourself.

But tonight it is "Australian Industry". And that very title tells me all that I want to tell you. Because Australian industry has now begun to see itself as something so closely related, one part to another, that it is almost indivisible.

No longer do we need to go along and say to manufactures, "Oh, it's quite all right, we ought to have manufacturers. Whatever they say against you, my dear boy, I think there is a little to be said for you, you know."

That day has gone. And the day has gone when people in the great primary industries devoted their waking hours to denouncing the existence of manufacturing in their own country.

And the day has gone by when both of them, or either of them, occupies any time in talking about, what shall I call it? "tertiary" industry: all the complexities of modern commercial existence upon which, in the long run, we all depend.

And so "Australian Industry" it is. Industry inter-dependent; industry in a country, a great and growing and marvellous country, which itself enjoys inter-dependence with other great free communities in the world.

It is really one of those occasions. I think it is almost historic when the very name of the Toast conveys to us something of the quality of the new Australia.

In my very earliest days when I was a boy, if you can exercise your imagination to think of such a time, it was many, many years before I ever became Prime Minister - it is a long time ago - and in my very earliest days, born and bred in the bush with wheatcrops nodding over the fence, I had a father who used to say to me in the long winter evenings: "Robert we must have manufacturing in Australia; you must grow up to be a protectionist". Well at the age of ten you don't quite know what a Protectionist is, do you? But I learned, I learned. The old man gave me the works. By the time I was fourteen I was a much more bigoted protectionist than a modern member of the Country Party. (Laughter)

But those were the days when it all had to be done defensively. Those were the days when Australia was thought about in other countries, and perhaps even in the mother country of our race, as a farming community. Those days have gone.

Australia today is two things. And it is worth remembering then: It is a great industrial country and it is a great trading country. We are one of the great trading nations of the world. And how do we trade? Not just by buying; not just by selling. But by doing it both ways. A great trading country!

Now up to now, or up to the other day, we have sold to the rest of the world predominantly the products of the soil and of the pastures and of the skill of the country. As manufacturers we have predominantly provided for ourselves.

We have said, "Well we have a good home market; it's adequately protected". I say that loosely and rhetorically gentlemen (Laughter) because I know that you all feel that it never has been. But still, by and large, you're out of the Bankruptcy Court. Therefore I venture to say that on the whole our manufacturing industry has been adequately protected.

But primarily we have sold to ourselves, to our neighbours in our own country. Australian manufacturing doesn't need to come of age in Australia: it came of age a long time ago in Australia. But it does need to come of age in the international sense.

I can't believe that Australia will occupy the place that she ought to occupy in the world if her balance of payments, her overseas reserves, depend primarily and substantially on the price of wool, or the wheat crop, or the price of wheat, or the prospects of the beef industry, or whatever it may be.

These are, of course, tremendously important things. But what has any great exporting country in the manufacturing field, what has it got that we haven't got? More skill? I decline to believe it. I'm vain enough to say that in any comparable fields of human activity, Australians ought never to take second place in skill, or character, or quality, or courage (Applause). So we don't give way in that field,

Somebody says, "Well, of course, we don't have the same turnover; we don't have the same volume of business". I don't suppose they did, once. I am prepared to assert that if we have enough imagination to get up out of our own backyard, we will find, in this new world which is blossoming all around us, a field for our activities which will make those who were gloomy about business turnover today, wonder what happened to them in ten years time.

All this requires an imaginative effort. We must get up over the border of our country and have a look at the world.

And if you look at the world, well what do you see? You see new nation after new nation coming what to? To political independence? Yes. That is perhaps relatively easy. But it is of no importance whatever unless they also come, perhaps not quite so fast, but in the quick run, to economic independence.

You look across Africa. You read the newspapers and you see that there are eight, nine, new African countries seeking to join the United Nations. We open the newspapers and we read all the horrors of the Congo internal disputes. We open our papers and we read about Asia and South-East Asian countries and all the turbulence that exists in countries from Laos to Cambodia, to South Vietnam, moving down into Indonesia, our nearest neighbour.

Well do we just look at this? And feel afraid? And feel apprehensive? Or do we take enough time off to say to ourselves, "What's going on?". It may be extraordinarily uncomfortable at present; it may be marred by all sorts of revolting incidents. But what is going on is that you have hundreds of millions of people struggling, not only to the political life, but to a new standard of life and of living.

And here we are, Australia, right on the corner of this development: the most advanced country, industrially, to be found in the Southern Hemisphere, with people all of whom are free and intelligent and active - at least 49½% or 50½% of them are intelligent politically - (Laughter). But let us use it broadly and metaphorically: an intelligent people, a people accustomed, each of them, to a standard of living, a material standard of living better than his father's and much better than his grandfather's.

This is a wonderful country to be in. And here we are with all the advantages of technique, of technology, of experience, of skill, of courage, of imagination. Why can't these things bring about a result that in 50 years' time - we needn't worry: we won't be here - but in 50 years' time Australia is one of the great exporters of the product of her factories, one of the leading exporters, and is able to say that so far as she goes with the rest of the world her economy

is as soundly placed as any of the great exporting nations of the first half of the twentieth century.

Now I just say that to you. Not to be rhetorical, but to urge you to see with the eye of imagination what a remarkable opportunity we have.

I know you may go away and say, "Well, of course we could do that if it were not for the Government". Well Governments, I'm happy to say, come and go and if we happen to enjoy your favour we begin to think that we did a frightfully good job. We may not be right.

As an old political sweat I want to tell you this: That all the good things that have been done in Australia, all the wonderful achievements that have been made in Australia, have been made by ordinary Australian men and women with courage and with enterprise.

And because I believe that, I have the greatest pleasure in the world in standing up before you tonight, never having yet, contrary to all precedent, been hooted even once, and propose to you, not just as Manufacturers, but as prominent citizens of a great all-round country, with great all-round industrial achievement, I stand and ask you to drink the health of "Australian Industry".
