

OPENING OF TWELFTH WORLD POULTRY CONGRESS,
SHOWGROUNDS, SYDNEY.

13TH AUGUST, 1962

Speech by the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. R.G. Menzies

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, Mr. World President, Mr. President Playfair - that's quite a decent mouthful - Ladies and Gentlemen :

About a fortnight ago, I began to assemble a few ideas in my mind for this afternoon because I knew that the Governor-General himself, as your Patron, could not be here. As you know, he's abroad but will be back, I am happy to say, early in October - or more accurately, at the end of September. I began to say to myself, "Now, my boy," - you know, one speaks to oneself quite frankly (Laughter) in the still watches of the night - "what do you know about fowls?" (Laughter) I was speaking to myself in an entirely non-political sense, you understand, (Laughter) and I drew on my boyish recollections - there were always a few chooks, as I am afraid we called them, running around. I was familiar with such respectable names as Buff Orpington and Rhode Island Reds and White Leghorns and Wyandottes and with that I ran out, I couldn't think of any more.

This morning, I had forty minutes looking around the various exhibits and I want to tell you that I arrived here as ill-informed as a Prime Minister could reasonably be, and I learnt more in forty minutes about your industry than I otherwise would have learned in ten years.

This, I think, is a most exciting Congress and a most exciting collection of exhibits. You, of course, are all very familiar with this industry, you are all very familiar with its extraordinary developments, particularly in the last ten or twenty years; but to the layman there is something dramatic about what has gone on. I can remember, and some of you can, a time when gentlemen would be heard to say, when asked "What are you going to do when you retire?" "Oh, I'll think I'll run a chicken farm." Just like that, you see. And I used to suffer from the illusion that the world's perfect chicken farm would be one in which white fowls rambled around on lovely green swards, presenting quite an artistic picture to the eye. Then, later on, when I found myself, years back, being driven from the Canberra airport into the city of Canberra, I would see bright lights running along in rows where I knew there was a chicken farm, and I would say, "That fellow is working late tonight," (Laughter) only to discover that he wasn't the one who was working. (Laughter)

But Sir, I think I might be right in saying that except for a few highly-qualified people, a great deal of this great industry was conducted in Australia in a sort of part-time fashion, with a limited number of poultry, limited equipment, perhaps a very limited knowledge of the scientific problems involved. Today, I have been told by my colleague, the Chairman, Mr. Adermann, who is infallible on these matters, that in 1960-61 the total product of this industry in Australia itself was valued at £67 million - a very perceptible percentage of the entire output of primary industry in Australia.

Now this has happened, I think I am right in saying, in a very limited period of years. So that today, what was regarded by so many people as a sort of amateur exercise, has become a major primary industry with an enormous production and a quite substantial export trade. What is going to happen to export trades in these fields we don't yet know because in all countries, all advanced countries at any rate, there has been a very great increase in production and self-sufficiency in fields of this kind.

Great Britain which used to be a very large export market for Australia has now, herself, developed the production in this field which was out of imagination fifteen years ago. But there are many parts of the world and many, many hundreds of millions of people in the world not so far away from here who, as their standards of living rise, will feel more and more the need for the production of this industry, bearing as it does so closely and with such immense value on the problem of the feeding of mankind. And that's a great problem.

By the end of this century we are told by the statisticians, by the demographers, that the population of the world will nearly double and people must eat if they are to live. Sir, I believe that the wonderful work, of which I will say a little in a moment, that is being done in this industry, reaching out into these new and populous countries, in a helpful way, by expert assistance, by training, will ultimately make a powerful contribution to the happiness of mankind. Unless these hundreds and hundreds of millions of people who will be added to the world's population between now and the turn of the century are able to eat, are able to be clothed, are able to live in a reasonable, civilised fashion, then the problems that the world may have in the rest of this century may be even greater than the ones we've already had.

Therefore, every industry which contains in itself such skill and such enthusiasm and such a willingness to raise the level of knowledge, every industry of this kind is, I believe, making a notable contribution to the welfare of the world for the rest of the twentieth century.

Now Sir, I thought I would just like to say a few words in elaboration of one aspect of that matter. It is very easy for people like me, and I represent I hope I may say the average layman in Australia - some of them even vote for me - (Laughter) but at any rate I am like them in this respect, that we have rather thought of this industry as a sort of catch-as-catch-can. I didn't know until I came here this morning to what extent scientific research had been applied to an industry of this kind and with such superb results. Here is something that has become a highly-organised industry.

I walked around, fortunately, for part of the time with Sir Frederick White who is the head of C.S.I.R.O., the greatest scientific research establishment in this country and one of the greatest in the world. He has for years now, with a rather despairing note in this voice, been trying to make me understand that we not only need more and more scientific research in Australia, but we need more and more application of it to the problems of the man on the land and that perhaps we have fallen down a little in not being able to convey to the man on the farm the full benefits, quickly enough, of pure scientific research and of research into

applied science, into technology. Today, I have seen it brought into a small compass. I would wish to hope, though of course I can't, that most of the people in this city might have the opportunity of looking at what can be seen here. They would come to realise, as I have, that here is an outstanding example - I am not sure that it isn't the outstanding example - of the application of scientific enquiry to the end of production, preparation, packaging and selling of a primary product. This is really the most tremendous thing.

As I have admitted to you frankly, I used to feel a little sorry for the incarcerated hen, sitting in a battery with the lights on, laying eggs (Laughter). I thought, "Dear me, you know, this is awfully like being a politician". (Laughter) Except that we don't have any handling system that automatically tells you that the egg is addled.

(Laughter) (Applause) But I realise now, having looked around, that all this demonstrates what I believe is the greatest revolution in productive and handling techniques in a primary industry that I have seen in my time. And all the credit must be given to those who have led the way in converting something that was a little casual, a little sketchy, even a little amateurish, into a magnificent industry, scientifically and technically abreast of the times and therefore able to present to the people a result far more stable, far more satisfactory than they have ever had before and, at the same time, enable - how many people did you say, Mr. Adermann? - a hundred thousand people to be directly or indirectly connected with this industry in Australia - is that right? - a hundred thousand.

We must give up - I would like to say this to any layman who is here - we must give up the idea that raising poultry, either as boilers (I've been learning, you see, this morning) (Laughter), broilers or boilers, or raising them for eggs and so on - we must give up the idea that this is a casual part-time occupation on the fringes of cities. This is a notable industry, and I am sure that the head of the C.S.I.R.O. would agree with me when I say that when in each primary industry we can say, with the same confidence, that the work of the scientist and the technologist has been married to the work of the actual operator in the field, when we can say that about all our primary industries, that will be a very happy day for a very great primary-producing country.

There is just one other aspect of that. We, in Australia, are of course, as we always are, and I hope we always will be, presented with problems. Life consists of encountering problems and battling with them and trying to overcome them. And one of our problems, not peculiar to us, is that as the world goes on, as our secondary industries develop, as they must if this country is to grow, we find constantly, don't we, the pressure of costs on the primary producer. The pressure of costs - whether he's a woolgrower, a wheatgrower or a chicken-raiser or whatever it may be. You can't solve the problem of increased costs just by some brutal decree that nobody's wages are ever to be increased. This is nonsense. You can't solve it by some mechanical step which, for example, by abolishing the tariffs, puts half the primary industries out of business. The long-run answer to costs is increased efficiency of production through increased output and a higher level of scientific skill and of scientific management. This is the lesson for us all to

learn. It will have to be learned by every exporting industry in Australia. It won't always be easy. The people who conduct these industries are not fools. They have lived their lives in them, they know far more about them than I do, but the one thing that I know in the broad, general sweep, is that if we are to meet the competition of the world and reach out with our products into other countries, then we must become, in the widest sense of the word, applied scientists; because science is learning and teaching at a rate of geometrical progression today. There is so much to be learned, so much advantage to be got from what is being discovered.

As I have had those ideas in my mind and I have spoken about them more than once, I want to tell you with all sincerity that thirty or forty minutes this morning, going around to see what's been done, what is being done, how it's being done, has excited me. I have seen here, within a small compass, the living proof of the kind of thing that I have been talking to you about.

And so I hope that you will allow me to say to all those who organised this Congress, the first World Congress of a primary industry to be held in Australia : "Thank you for a magnificent piece of organisation" and I hope you will allow me to say to those engaged in this industry, not only "Thank you" but "Congratulations" on what I think will be looked back upon as one of the great achievements in Australia in the last fifteen or twenty years.

Sir, I have the greatest possible pleasure in declaring the Congress open.
