

INCREASED COAL EXPORTS TO JAPAN

Statement by the Acting Prime Minister and Minister for National Development, Senator W.H. Spooner, M.M.

The New South Wales coalmining industry had increased its trade with Japan at the expense of the United States, the Minister for National Development, Senator Spooner, said in Cessnock yesterday.

The American share of coal exports to Japan had fallen from 60.2% in 1960 to 53.4% in 1961, he said.

Australia in 1960 supplied 16.6% of Japanese coal imports, but by 1961 the proportion had risen to 23%.

"This is a feather in the cap of the New South Wales coalmining industry," the Minister said. "But we will need to fight hard to maintain this trade. Export business is always fiercely competitive.

"We can expect to be challenged for the Japanese market. This is why, when the New South Wales Minister for Mines, Mr. J.B. Simpson, M.L.A., and I went to Japan two years ago we arranged with the Japanese steel industry to purchase their coal requirements on long-term contracts in consideration of our respective governments pushing ahead with the port reconstruction programme at Newcastle, Port Kembla and Balmain.

"The main proportion of this expenditure falls upon the New South Wales Government. But I am glad to say that the Commonwealth is providing £1 million as a grant to New South Wales and lending another £1,650,000."

Senator Spooner was speaking at the inauguration of a new bowling green at Cessnock. With Mr. Simpson, the Minister for Mines, he handed the green over to the Cessnock Bowling Club on behalf of their respective governments.

The Senator said that Australia faced great changes which would follow Britain's entry into the Common Market. They would necessitate re-thinking, and some readjustment of many of Australia's trading activities.

"We have anticipated this," he said. "Much has been done already and in particular the coal industry has given a national lead.

"We foresaw the effect in local markets of competitive fuels. We sought export business - and sought it successfully.

"Six years ago the total overseas sales from the State was 204,000 tons. In 1961/62 we sold more than 3,162,000 tons overseas. Although it is unlikely that we will repeat this level this year, yet we anticipate that we shall sell approximately 2½ million tons, and the Joint Coal Board is confident that there will be steady increases thereafter."

The Minister went on to speak of "great improvements" which had occurred in the coalmining industry in the past few years:

- Coal was in ample supply;
- Quality of coal had been improved by the introduction of washeries and treatment plants;
- Coal prices were about 15% lower than they were in 1952;
- There had been a great decline in industrial disputes. In 1949/50 the percentage of possible manshifts lost was 14.28%, whereas the figure was down to 1.91% on June 30, 1961.

One of the contributing causes for these big improvements had been the betterment of social amenities on the coalfields. These had been made possible by grants from the Welfare Fund of the Joint Coal Board.

The Federal Government had contributed £1,890,000 to the Fund, and the N.S.W. Government £969,502: a total of £2,860,402 by the two governments.

The Welfare Fund had contributed to the capital cost of the new Cessnock bowling green to the extent of £1,000, which had been provided in equal shares by the Commonwealth and State Governments.

Other guests invited to the special luncheon and handing-over ceremony included Mr. G. NEILLY, M.L.A.; Mr. K. BOOTH, M.L.A.; Mr. A. JAMES, M.H.R.; Messrs. S.C. COCHRAN, S. FLOWERS and B.W. HARTNELL, of the Joint Coal Board; the Mayor of Cessnock, Alderman BROWN, and the Deputy Mayor, Alderman BLAIR; Mr. J.W. STEPHENSON, Town Clerk, and Inspector SEWELL.

SYDNEY.

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