

OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE DALWOOD WYBONG PARK
WINERY, N.S.W.

Speech by the Prime Minister, Mr. Harold Holt.

17th February, 1967

Mr. Chairman of the Board of Directors, and Mr. Geoffrey Penfold Hyland, my Ministerial Colleagues of the Commonwealth and State Governments, members of the Parliaments of the Commonwealth and of New South Wales, many distinguished guests, employees of this historic firm of Penfolds, ladies and gentlemen:

"If all be true that I do think
There are five reasons why we drink

Good wine, a friend, or being dry,
Or lest we may be by and bye

For any other reason why."



Now I didn't get that out of somebody's book of quotations. I learnt that one on a visit to New Zealand about a week or so ago, and the Minister for Agriculture was with me and I said that one of my most pleasant chores of the week ahead when I returned to Australia was this official opening of the Dalwood Estate Vineyard and Winery, and he said, "Well, this may help you. This demonstrates the respectability of wine drinking which was expressed by an eighteenth century Anglican priest named Aldrich." My subsequent researches have confirmed that I felt I knew all along, that both in the Old Testament and the New Testament are to be found authorities for the proposition that the moderate consumption, certainly of table wine, has been encouraged by the most respectable authorities from the earliest of recorded time.

We find that in the Old Testament we are told that "wine makes glad the heart of man", and the New Testament being rather more modern in approach and presumably a certain amount of travel having been undertaken in the interval, warned against the danger of drinking water. "Drink no longer water but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake," and as one of the most regular travellers for the Commonwealth Government I would urge that note of caution upon you.

And, of course, there are so many valuable injunctions to the man in public life from those who have written about this precious commodity. It was Emerson who told us a man would be eloquent if you give him good wine, and if I go beyond the time appointed so that we miss a second parachute jump, you will know where to attribute the responsibility for that. And we are told by the Germans that a day without wine is a day without sunshine, and this would be accepted, I think, by many of us who would also agree with Horace when he told us to drown our care in wine.

Now I myself am a great believer in temperance, including temperance itself. I think we should be temperate in all things including temperance, and that gives us a certain amount of flexibility in our approach to the problems of life. And I am sure that it's been a great pleasure to all of us to have come along here today as guests of Mr. Penfold Hyland and all associated with this historic name in the wine industry of Australia, and in these beautiful surroundings find ourselves together enjoying delightful food, agreeable company and very enjoyable wine.

Now I mention the five reasons and I think that most of the, if not all, can be exemplified here. Good wine. we have enjoyed that. I am told that something went wrong with the works yesterday and 200 gallons flooded down the path inbetween these casks and will not be consumed - not by human beings, anyhow, in future. I don't know whether we should rise and pause for a moment to regret that circumstance, but we have enjoyed good wine.

Good friends, as I have looked around this room I see many people who have come from afar, from Sydney and beyond, braved the hazards of the climate and the roads, which cannot be maintained on the quite inadequate grant that the Commonwealth Government makes for them, but at the end of the road of pioneering here, they are in agreeable company and these very pleasant circumstances. I am sure, Geoffrey, we have all felt it worthwhile and that we rejoice with you in a day which honours the opening of this new establishment contributing so much to the future prosperity and progress of the Hunter Valley.

Now the Hunter Valley is itself, of course, one of the great wine-growing districts of Australia and I predict that as people round the rest of the world over the years come to appreciate the quality of Australian wines it will become one of the notable wine growing districts of the world, and recognised as such.

I found it very impressive to learn from the facts supplied to me that if there is brought into wine production the thousand or eleven hundred acres which are under the control in this area of this organisation, the volume of wine produced will be far in excess of that produced by all the other vineyards at this moment of the Hunter Valley. And so this is a very remarkable development in an area which has already contributed much to the prosperity and progress of this state of New South Wales, and here we have the elements of a great national asset which will carry Australia's name to the approval of those who consume its products beyond our own boundaries and far around the world.

Now one could say a great deal about the wine industry and I should perhaps reserve that for a more suitable occasion in the Parliament. It's rather interesting to learn as one studies the facts that the consumption in Australia of table wine - and this has been perhaps partly at the expense of the fortified wines - but of table wine has more than trebled over the past ten years. Now that's not merely because we brought in a lot of immigrants from Europe who have been accustomed to drinking wine as some of our people have been accustomed to drinking beer. It's also attributable to the fact that as we native Australians learn something of what wine can mean in more agreeable living for ourselves, our own consumption of it has grown, and I believe it could grow considerably more than it has. We have great natural advantages for wine growing through most of Australia, or certainly many parts of most of the States of Australia, and I would gladly join with Mr. Penfold Hyland and other spokesmen for the names that rate high in the wine industry in a campaign against what I might term at this point of time "snobbism" in the consumption of wine.

You know there's a lot of guff that goes on in the consumption of wine in public places, and the ritual that has developed around this, more particularly over recent years, is quite terrifying to the average casual restaurant visitor or hotel-goer. I had quite a run of experience of it in New Zealand when I was there where most of our meals were spent out at public places. You know the drill that one goes through. Having settled yourselves down and got comfortable, if your host is sufficiently alert,

he will summon the wine waiter. That will depend to some extent upon the degree of service as to the time interval which then elapses. The wine waiter will then present you with usually a somewhat fly-speckled little journal which contains what the house may or may not have to offer. Frequently one is disappointed in finding that it's out of stock or somebody else had the bottle the night before, but a further interval passes and then finally along comes the bottle - usually if it's a white wine or a sparkling wine, contained in some ice bucket, there's a further delay while it's twisted around and juggled about a bit, and then with a flourish the fellow will remove the cork and he'll bring the cork over you to sniff. You are terrified you're going to do the wrong thing at that stage. You'll either tell him to take it back - when it's perfectly good - or you'll bravely say "go on with it" when you suspect that it mightn't be as good as you would hope. And then he'll give you a certain portion to taste. Now I have been host on a good number of public occasions when wine was consumed and I've run a bit of a mental graph on these things and I find that about two times out of five, he never comes back to the fellow who's done the tasting. And by the time you have gone through all these processes you're about into the second or third course and cursing inwardly that it didn't come earlier.

Now, my upbringing on drinking with meals occurred shortly after I left the university, at a quite modest restaurant, as it was then, but it's become rather more posh establishment now in Melbourne, known as the Florentino. For 2/6d. in the currency of those days one had a three course meal and a little bottle of wine that was plonked on the table according to whether you said red or white. I haven't used the word "plonked" with any special significance, because I used to find this wine quite potable, and if one was sufficiently injudicious, or didn't have enough work to do as in those depression years most of us didn't, to consume that quite small bottle (about half the current small bottle size) and say you'd like another, you paid an extra sixpence for that, and if you wanted lobster mayonnaise extra, you paid an extra sixpence for that. Well some might say they were the good old days. We didn't have as many sixpences in those days perhaps as we do now but the fact of the matter was that you had a good potable wine that had no nonsense about it. It was there from the time you started your meal and away you went. If you wanted more it came quickly to you, and those of you who have gone to Italy in recent years will know how you can still repeat that process there to this day.

Now it was Omar Khayam who told us, as most of you will recall: "I wonder often what the vintners buy one half so precious as the stuff they sell." I'd like to just amend that slightly and put "what the restauraners or hoteliers buy one half so precious as the stuff they sell" because I find it something of a deterrent to sit down either at a hotel or a restaurant, pick up the wine list and find that in their enthusiasm they've added something upwards of a 100% to what I know that wine can be bought at, not necessarily wholesale, but even retail. And I think it's a very short-sighted policy because you always think hard about the second bottle when you know you are paying over 100% on the price you could have it at home, and if by chance at a cheaper level you are able to consume two or three bottles, well one is less resistant to the port or the brandy which might follow as a logical consequence, and so I would like to see the wine industry make its best efforts not only on Governments - and I don't reject or object to the representations we receive from the wine industry - but to use their influence to reduce the ritual so that more casual wine drinkers will be encouraged to do it without feeling that they are exposing themselves embarrassingly in public places and also to see that the price reaches the consumer at a reasonable level.

Now I said that as a Government we meet the industry from time to time. Quite obviously if one studies the facts this is a highly favoured industry. There are very few areas of agreeable human experience that remain untaxed by governments. I suppose love-making is one and wine drinking is another. There are not many more that I can think of. I perhaps should have thought of this when I was with the Premiers yesterday and they were wanting to open up new avenues of taxation. But for our part we impose no tax burden on table wines. I don't think we do, Geoffrey, on fortified wines. We certainly do on brandy, but even here we have a smaller charge on brandy than we do on the other spirits, which again creates a grievance with those who manufacture the other spirits. In other words, you can't win in this business of government, but none of us has ever regretted what we have done in respect of the wine industry and the preference which has enabled the surplus production of wine to be converted in many instances to brandy and to give the Australian public the benefit of that lower price.

Now I don't want to weary you with anecdotes for they bristle through the history of wine but there is one which I might leave with you before I move on, a story which appealed to me about Winston Churchill, who of course did his best during his lifetime to assist the wine industry to the best of his ability. And at one international conference in a very large room Winston Churchill enlivened what was otherwise a dreary patch of discussion by saying that the champagne he had drunk through a lifetime would have filled that room. He had his scientist friend with him he used to travel round with him the Member of the House of Lords . . . his name escapes me at the moment but he quickly made some mental calculations of the quantity which on average he would assume Sir Winston to have consumed and he had to tell him that he wouldn't have filled that large room. He would have only brought it up to a level of about two feet and the story runs that Sir Winston was in a rather depressed state of mind for the rest of the proceedings.

But he is only one of a long line of notable public men who have found in the consumption of wine in good company, relaxation, a source of refreshment and an encouragement to get on with the tasks ahead.

Now my purpose, as you have been told, is formally to declare open the Vineyard and the Winery of Dalwood Estates, but before I do that as my final act I am going to ask you all to rise and join me in a toast, and the toast is this: There is not with us today a very wonderful lady to whom Penfolds means very much indeed and who has meant very much to Penfolds, and I'm going to ask you to join me, as I am sure Geoffrey would approve, in drinking a toast to Mrs. Gladys Penfold Hyland. I hope she is able to hear what we are saying but if not, on your behalf and to her, I say from all of us thankyou Gladys for all you've meant to Penfolds and thankyou for being such a wonderful person as I find all the Penfolds are. So here's to Gladys.

And I now have very great pleasure in formally and officially declaring open the Dalwood Estates Vineyard and Winery.
