

**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE RT. HON. R.G.
MENKIES AT THE OPENING OF THE T1 POWER STATION
AT COOMA, ON THE 31ST OCTOBER, 1959.**

Sir, Ladies and Gentlemen:

This is a remarkable occasion. In fact it is an inspiring occasion. Before I go on to say why I think it is inspiring, I might give you, perhaps, one commonplace reason why I think it is remarkable.

Every now and then on some occasion of this kind my distinguished friend, the Leader of the Opposition, and I manage to be on the same side; but on this occasion for the first time he has made, word for word, the speech that I was going to make. And if I had any sense I would do what judges have been known to do before today, just say: "I concur and have nothing to add". But I won't do that because I am so sympathetic with my wife who wants all this time, I imagine, that we are taking up, to determine what she is going to say herself.

But it really is the most inspiring occasion. I couldn't agree more when I say, as my colleague has said, that this is an enormous example of co-operative effort in the civil history of Australia. I would put it every bit as high as that because it has represented co-operation on every level and of every kind. My colleague, Senator Spencer, has been good enough to say pleasant things about my own small labours in this vineyard and I appreciate them. But, after all, this is one of those cases, not so uncommon in political history, in which one Government conceives something and another brings it to fruition. This has happened many times, perhaps, and is not always observed; but here it is as clear as it could be.

You stand on the top of one of these mountains, you look out of a window on a mountainside at Cobarurra, you see these mountains piling up and these valleys descending into the mist, and if you are a layman like myself you say: "What stroke of genius is it that enables people to see their way with the eye of imagination through these great mountains, devising tunnels, sub-terranean power stations, great dams, the creation of great lakes, the diversion of streams?". This enormous complex engineering seems to me to call upon a certain amount of genius somewhere.

It was of course, in the vaguest way, a dream in Australia thirty, forty, fifty, sixty years ago. But it wasn't until the period of time of my predecessors that a committee was set up - here was the first piece of co-operation - an engineering committee, presided over by Dr. Loder, a celebrated engineer, whose name will always be honourably associated with this work. And that engineering committee began to devise the practical things, to translate the dreams into terms of hard reality. And after that, legislative form was given to the scheme and the scheme was, in fact, begun. And then my own Government came into office. We have, as you have been reminded that it was a very proper thing and an expected thing for us to do, taken all the necessary steps to back this scheme, both with finance and energy and such enthusiasm as an enthusiast like Sir William Hudson can derive from mere pedestrian politicians. And we have done our best and great sums have been spent.

But the Commission itself, under Sir William Hudson, has taken plans which were not in themselves complete or final and has given them their application; has encountered difficulties and has overcome them. And therefore, the great thanks and the great compliments today, I think, must go to the people who had the genius and then the skill to conceive of this plan and to put it into engineering execution.

You say, it was co-operation all along the line. Because it was an inter-state engineering committee that set, the Government, such of them with some performance, I think, to the credit in the history of Australia, co-operating, in order of time, in order to achieve this result. Today it is the impact of all circumstances that we should have in this remarkable place, the proof, the final demonstration of co-

operation between engineers and engineers, between the countries and countries, between two great nations, or three great nations of the top and so on, so you have been produced, of the bottom. I rather like seeing up here because whenever I have given part a group of men who are working and have heard off for hours and they see me, they are so much stronger to Australian politics that they always applaud me most warmly (laughter) and I like that.

In our other same this scheme represents this remarkable co-operative effort. It may not be regarded by some of you as very important, but it is tremendously important. There were, from the beginning, substantial doubts as to whether the Government of Australia had the constitutional power to do this job - that demonstration of men has a habit of popping up every now and then and tripping you. And clearly the way to get over that was to do that but then there is connection with early years and years before we have the co-operation in that Field of the Government of New South Wales, the Parliament of New South Wales and the Government and Parliament of Victoria. And I am happy to say that after long negotiations in which I am sure, that my colleague Senator Spooner never more completely exhibited his own politeness, after long negotiations we have now reached a point of time at which this magnificent national enterprise is supported by the legislative authority of the two States who are the countries, the alliance for the electric power that is produced - Victoria and New South Wales - as well, of course, as the Government itself. So that we go ahead with confidence, with comfort, with security, with an assurance in our minds that we may go from step to step until the whole of this scheme is complete.

All I want to say to you before I sit down to sleep I think whether it ever will be complete. That is not because they will not do all the things that they are here on the board, but it is because they will think of other things that ought to be done before some of them are finished. I know a great deal about the Williamstown water treatment works through visits there and then this scheme was put into form - it goes on, ranging on. And so I am sure, if not by, then somebody else, will have the performance that I have had more than once, with Senator Spooner, seeking in to see me when the year is eight months gone and saying: "Thank I'm terribly sorry old man - I know the Cabinet trusted me very well on the whole this year - but really we are standing out of order". "My" says I, with that well-known expression that so readily becomes my, "my is better". And he says: "Well, you see, they are doing the job so well and so fast that if we don't find some more money they will all have to stop work" and so I go on quietly as a lamb. That is my co-operation in the thing that is before me. I have committed to be asked by Senator (laughter) your other year. And I was always my own affair, whether it is myself or somebody else, that that is a continuous process. And on the whole - though this is not to be taken as kidding my Hon. Member, Friend the Treasurer - I don't think it because, of all the constructive enterprises with which the Government of Australia has been concerned, this, I believe is the most magnificent and will be most enduring.