

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE RT. HON.
R.G. MENZIES, AT THE OPENING OF THE McCAUGHEY
INSTITUTE, COREE, on SATURDAY, 19TH NOVEMBER,
1960

Sir, and ladies and gentlemen:

This platform has been placed with the most diabolical cunning. (Laughter) The speaker can talk to you, and not one of you can look him in the eye! And this gives us, I think, a most unfair advantage.

But, at the same time, I am very grateful to my old friend, Sir Henry Manning, for what he said about my wife and myself, and I don't propose to make you look me in the eye for any longer than I need to, because Sir Henry Manning has really "done me" in the eye today.

Last night at Coonong I said to him, with that boyish innocence that characterises me (Laughter) "Harry, what" - I call him "Harry"; I've known him for about a hundred years - (Laughter) - "Harry, tell me about this business. What really should I be saying tomorrow?". And he told me all that last night. (Laughter) Then, unblushingly, he gets up and tells it all to you; and leaves me without a feather to fly with. (Laughter)

So, I can perhaps summarise what I want to say to explain the genuine pleasure that I have in being here, on what I regard as a most historic occasion. I don't regard this as some local event, though local events are very important. This is a national event occurring this afternoon.

Because, this tremendous enterprise is not only, and we all remember it with respect, a memorial to two brave men, it goes further than that as the years go by. It is a memorial to the generous and intelligent interest of a famous family; it is a memorial to all the people who have worked to create it, because most of it has been created over a period of years; it is a memorial to the profound instinct that we have in Australia, an instinct not easily dislodged, the instinct to realise that our strength is still in the soil, and our national wealth is still to be found in its products.

This place seems to me to be strategically, as one might say, magnificently placed, because work is going to be done in management, in fodder conservation, in breeding, in irrigation, in dry farming. All these various aspects of rural production will have concentrated upon them in this place not only the work of the theorists, but the practical application of the people who take up the works evolved in terms of theory. And it is strategically placed because, I venture to say, that within shooting distance of it, it will encounter practically all those types of farming, and all those types of problems.

Younger men who are here today, of course, are familiar with the growing interest in research for the improvement of the products of the land. I'm old enough to remember at a place not so far from here, as the crow flies, up in the north-west of Victoria, up on the fringes of the Mallee - when I was a small boy about the age of one of these handsome creatures down here - I remember the agricultural expert coming up, it was a wheat farming area, and having a meeting out on a farm, of a number of the local farmers, and talking to them about using super!

It seems hard to believe that now. But there it was, when I was ten, or something like that, I heard this man talking about superphosphates. I had to enquire afterwards, what on earth that meant.



He met a very sceptical audience. "Oh, this is a new fangled thing." "I've never done this before". "The old man didn't do it before". And they had to be persuaded. The better farmers in the district decided that they would make a compromise: they wouldn't put a hundredweight on - that seemed grossly extravagant - but they would try half a hundredweight. And they found, when the next season came in, that they were two or three bushels up on the average of their particular area. So, it grew - by practice and experience.

That seems very elementary to us now. But the truth is that it is only in the lifetime of people like myself that we have wakened up to the significance of genuinely scientific research. That, of course, is one of the great things that is going to ensure the future of Australia.

If we were stagnant in production, if we were stagnant in quality, this country just couldn't receive additional population, as it does today. It wouldn't know what to do with them. It couldn't sustain great secondary industries as it does today; it couldn't maintain its volume of exports, and therefore look after our balance of payments if it were not for this constant drive for increased production and improved quality.

This was seen with clear vision by those who created this Institute in their generosity of heart and in their generosity of mind, which is not less important. They saw these things. And the result is what we see about us today, and what we can, with the eye of imagination, I think, see in the future.

I seem to be becoming a little research-minded myself, because yesterday morning I was opening a metallurgical engineering building at Lucas Heights, which is the nuclear power research station, conducted by the Commonwealth, with a very distinguished band of scientific people.

I ventured to say to them - I thought it was a risky thing to say, but I get a bit of pleasure out of saying risky things - that I wasn't too sold myself on space research. I don't mind other people doing it, I think that is all right. I don't mind the Russians firing up Sputniks and following them by other things with other names, and going "beep beep" in the midnight air - I've no intrinsic objection to that. And I'm assured by competent people that much good may come of it, some day.

But we, as a country of ten million people, have limited resources, and I believe that we must concentrate our resources, so far as they are available for research, on the most useful, practical ends for developing this country and the lives of the people who live in it. Other great and rich countries can afford these other rather luxurious adventures. But we, in Australia, ought to be spending more, and more, and more money on research. It increases, I'm happy to say, year by year.

But I want to see it, myself, primarily directed to satisfying human needs because it seemed to me a poor thing if we were to subtract a great deal of the national revenue in order to be able to say, "Well we've put up a satellite", when in point of fact we have so many unsolved problems in Australia.

If we are going to solve these problems we won't solve them just by money because although money is an essential commodity, money itself doesn't do the work. We must attract

more and more people into the scientific service of the country, not all, with great respect, nuclear physicists - chemists, bio-chemists, biologists. All the people who can achieve so much in the future as indeed they have achieved so much in the past.

I hope nobody here will ever forget that although my distinguished friend, Mr. Khrushchev, may claim that his country sent up the first satellite, and was the first to administer a rude blow to the moon, it is the countries of the western world who have been responsible for the bio-chemical improvements, for the anti-biotic drugs, for the prolongation of life, for actively combating disease, for doing all these things that have meant so much to men and women and children all over the world. (Applause)

As I said once, there are millions of people in the world who looked out and saw Sputnik going across the sky, who wouldn't have been alive to see Sputnik if it hadn't been for the superb scientific work of Western scientists. (Applause)

So let us remember that; let us understand - as you do, so well, without being told by me in a hot sun - let us remember all the time that we are not here looking at something that is hi-falutin' or theoretical or irrelevant. This research institute will take its place in Australia as one of the great constructive efforts to solve our national problems. (Applause) Every man connected with it, every woman connected with it, is entitled to our respect. They certainly have mine. They are entitled to our gratitude. They certainly have mine.

So, far from thinking that I confer a favour on anybody by coming down here today, I regard it as a very great privilege to have been asked to come down here, because, as I end now by saying, what I said at the beginning, this is an event of first class national importance.

Therefore, Sir, I suppose retrospectively, because it seems to have been going for a little while, I declare the Institute open, and I will now unveil a plaque which I haven't seen; I don't know how to unveil it, but I'll do my best. (Applause)
