

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE RT. HON. R.G. MENZIES, AT THE OPENING OF THE KODAK PLANT, AT COBURG, MELBOURNE, ON FRIDAY, 15TH APRIL, 1961

Sir and ladies and gentlemen:

You have been listening, so far, to the experts. What they don't know about this great enterprise and its history, is not worth learning. I am here in the humble, but necessary capacity, of a customer.

I am going to say a few words, not too many, about photography, but before I do, I would like to say this. I was very glad to hear so much reference made to the firm of Baker and Rouse because when I was a small boy those names were practically as well known as Gilbert and Sullivan. Baker and Rouse - this was a name, or a term so familiar to people in Australia even in those days that it is hard to believe that it is so long ago.

Now, Sir, I said I was a customer. I want to start off by making one or two customer's complaints. I have done a certain amount of cinematography myself as an amateur on tackle suitably obtained from the Kodak people, and over a period of years whenever I brought in a great batch of stuff from some overseas journey, I would encounter my old friend Merton of Kodak, who is sitting down there now, and he would say to me in a most amiable manner, "These things came out quite well; how lucky you were". That is the furthest I could ever get. I once took a beautiful lot of sequences, I thought, of a bull fight in Lisbon, full of colour. I thought it was very good - and so did he. But you must never allow the customer to feel that he has got the better of you. "Oh", he said, "you know that is a remarkable thing; you know that shot with all that lighting was impossible!" (Laughter) Did he go on to say, "You are a miracle-worker?" Not at all. "Hmmm, you were lucky weren't you?"

Now there is another aspect of photography. If you were a politician like myself; if you had to sit in various interviews as much as I do; if you had to become so accustomed to these people, the press photographers, you would know what happens. One fellow comes in looking all innocent; he's got one of these little deceiving looking cameras; and he goes click, and goes click, and goes click - quite rapid fire - while you are in the middle of a conversation. He goes away with about 30 pictures of you, some of them showing you scowling like mad, some of them showing you with a most fatuous grin on your face, some of them showing you looking down with intense gloom, and others with your head so far back that they could take a study of your adenoids. Back they go to the office and they are put in stock. And when the day comes that I am popular - if it ever does - (Laughter) in that particular office, they bring out the best one. It makes me look as handsome as possible; nice photograph: 'Put a good one in this time; we're writing a leading article in his favour'. But most times of course it is the odd ones. Oh, dear! I've suffered from photography as much as any mortal man.

Yet I am delighted to be here as a customer, and as somebody who has naturally an immense feeling for his own country.

The name of this Company is so world famous that whenever one thinks of photography, photographic material, one naturally thinks of Kodak. That is a remarkable thing. It is not a monopoly because there are others. But if any enterprise in this century has established its name as a name of immense

honour and repute and quality in the fields of photography it is Kodak. That, I think, is something to be proud of; something for everybody connected with it to be proud of.

After all you don't become pre-eminent in this field or in any other field without producing the goods or without having some quality. Of course this vast concern has based its development and its prestige and its power upon devoting, at a time when lots of people didn't do it, lots of time and lots of skill to research. This is one of the first of the great fields of free enterprise, in which one observed many years ago a concentration upon research.

So starting with research and going through production and processing, and selling, this enterprise has not only been able to provide the vital materials for the astonishing modern developments of photography in all its aspects, but it has, if I may come back to myself as a customer, provided world-wide facilities for the itinerant amateur incompetent photographer.

But, Sir, there is a relationship between photography and modern life that I think one ought to glance at. After all I suppose I am getting a bit long in the tooth - as I am occasionally reminded by my political opponents, one of whom I can see beaming at me amiably from the audience. I must be because I can remember the day, as indeed many of you can, or some of you can, when to be taken to the photographer to have that cabinet size picture taken for posterity involved sitting in a chair rather rigidly and uncomfortably, and having a pair of forceps put in the back of your neck - do you remember? - and you backed into it. And there you were held like a vice, keeping you quiet enough for the slow speeds of those days to have a chance.

That, of course, Sir, explains the glassy eye that you detect in our more recent ancestors. When you see the family photographs in the family albums it is all due to the forceps and the primitive material of that time. Now, of course, all these things have changed.

But this business of photography is not a mere matter of providing somebody with a hobby, or somebody with a living, taking portrait studies in Collins Street. These are very useful undertakings, though I have never been able to secure that tremendous amount of mercy that I would wish from a photographer.

Apart altogether from that, Sir, photography is now entering into almost every aspect of life. You consider how, with its tremendous development in precision and speed it has been able to come to the aid of medical work, of scientific investigation. When we think of the miracles of colour photography with its enormous developments we can see how far this has come in aid, not merely of individual entertainment, but of the sciences and of advancement in many branches of knowledge.

It is not so long since a world event could happen which would come to us by telegraph or by cable, be the subject of a certain amount of letter press, and then there would be a delay for sometime before any graphic picture of the event could arrive. Isn't it amazing today to think that within a few hours, thanks to the miracle and precision of photography, and the great new arts of transmission, we can see the pictures, literally, of events, all round the world. This, of course,

adds to the vivacity of the printed sheet; it adds to our comprehension of what is going on in the world. Because we don't all read and like reading; many of us like to look because we like looking. It is therefore the great, the tremendous art of photography which is at the basis of a growing amount of knowledge of the other countries in the world. God knows we need a growing knowledge of other countries in the world, and they need it of us, because the one hope of the world is that we shall, on a basis of genuine knowledge and understanding, become tolerant of each other and live in peace with each other.

Sir, wherever I have gone in the world I have been immensely struck by this fact, that the possession of the camera is becoming almost one of the signs of a high-living standard in any country. More and more, every youngster, every young man and woman, every adult, every veteran, feels more and more the attraction of being able not only to see something, but to record it. It was truly said that 'journeys end in lovers' meetings'. Journeys end a great deal today in photographers' meetings. I don't know of any more remarkable way in which to refresh the memory which is at best a treacherous thing, than to have these superb records of events and of people.

So, both publicly and privately this industry has merited its growth. This day today is for your Company an hour of great triumph. This is a phenomenal development, this magnificent site in this good setting, with a vista of the future that exhibits no small outlook on the future of Australia.

I am delighted to be here. I would like to congratulate everybody who has had anything to do with it and I give myself the singular pleasure of declaring it open.

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