

NO. 2 TV RECORDING:

"TALK TO THE NATION"  
BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE RT. HON. R.G. MENZIES  
23RD NOVEMBER, 1961

Ladies and gentlemen,

I'm going to talk to you for a few minutes about the development of Australia. I'm sorry if, standing here, I appear to be rather of a school master about to give you a lecture - I even have a sort of cane in my hand - but there is a map and I want to point a few things out to you on the map.

But before I do that I just want to say this: the business of a Commonwealth Government is overwhelmingly to do what it can to develop the country. If there is one thing that we look back on with some satisfaction over the last ten years, twelve years, it is the enormous growth of Australia, the development of its resources. If there is one thing that we put before you as our policy, it is to continue that development to the greatest possible degree.

And in order to do that you don't want to have a Government that says "let it be done". You must have a Commonwealth Government that knows that it wants to help to get certain great things done; you want State Governments willing and able to co-operate in the getting of them done - and some enormous work has been done in the States - and in the third place you want to have a proper co-operation with large private enterprise. I'll point that out to you in a moment on the map when I refer to the railways project in Western Australia, or the Mount Isa railway project in Queensland. All three parties must work together. They must have a co-operative spirit, and they must have a clear idea in their minds of what it is they want to do.

Now we've been in office, as you know, for 12 years, and in the course of that time tremendous things have been going on in Australia. I'm going to mention one or two of them to you by pointing them out - or pointing their location out - on the map. And in particular I want to refer to a few of them to which we have directed attention quite in the last few months.

Now let me just look at the map and point out one or two things to you. I'm not going to pretend to exhaust the list because time would not permit that, but there are a few things here that weren't here a few years ago.

Down here in Victoria for example you see the railway line running down to Melbourne. The unification of the railway line from Wodonga to Melbourne is a work of tremendous importance: it means that you will have a standard gauge railway available for great traffic from Sydney to Melbourne. And of course there is already a standard gauge one that runs up to Brisbane.

Down here in this corner is Tasmania. Tasmania always had a tremendous problem of shipping, because, of course, it depends on shipping. It has no land transport, obviously, to the mainland: it needs shipping. And for many years it relied on a subsidised ship, plus rather uncertain shipping services from other sources. We have, ourselves, in the last few years, had built and put on to the run to Tasmania the Princess of Tasmania, a tremendous boon, particularly to the Tasmanian tourist traffic; the Bass Trader, the roll-on roll-off ship which greatly facilitates the handling of cargo; and we have already had, in the last few months, a little to do with providing a new cattle ship for King Island. So that the transport problem of Tasmania has been, in a large measure, solved, in the last few years.

Another great problem that confronted us was the problem of developing our exports. This is vital to Australia. And we have looked at all these proposals that come up from the States, largely in the light of whether they will develop export business and improve our international, and therefore our local, financial position. And so, in the last few months, we have made arrangements with the Government of New South Wales under which we make available substantial financial assistance for improving the coal ports in Newcastle, Sydney - in Balmain in fact - and in Port Kembla; and also an arrangement with the Government of Queensland in relation to the port of Gladstone. Now all of these ports, the new facilities that will exist in them, will give us an increasing export trade in coal - and how important that is you will perhaps remember when I tell you, or remind you, that when we came into office Australia was importing coal. Today we are exporting it in large and growing quantities.

Oil search has gone on, of course, and those engaged in it are optimistic about ultimate results, here, and over in the West and around here. And, well all I need say is that we have some hope on this matter. But a great deal of work has been done, and great financial encouragement has been given by the Government of the Commonwealth.

Up here in Queensland is the major work - the reconstruction of the railway line from Mount Isa down to Townsville and Collinsville. Now that is a very big undertaking. My Government has agreed by a contract signed only a few months ago, to find £20m. of the initial cost of this line for the Government of Queensland. The effect of the line will be to make it possible - indeed to make it certain - that the Mount Isa mine will become probably the greatest copper mine in the world! The Company itself will spend scores of millions of pounds; and the result will be to add, I believe, scores of millions of pounds to the export income of Australia.

Now I won't take time about Weipa and bauxite because they go back a few years, although they are now in the process of development.

But up here we have, in the last few months, provided money for the Government of Queensland to encourage the building of beef roads, that is to say roads that will enable beef cattle to come off in better condition, and thereby add to our export income. The same is true in the Northern Territory, where, of course, in addition, as you know, we have these great deposits of bauxite and the already substantially worked deposits of uranium in Rum Jungle.

In the West up in the north we have found millions ourselves for the development of the Kimberleys; and quite recently more money for beef roads to take cattle into Wyndham.

Down here, the great scheme, a scheme that will cost Governments £42m. and the steel company at least as much, the great scheme of unifying the gauge from Kalgoorlie down to Kwinana, enabling iron ore deposits of great magnitude to be worked in Koolyanobbing, and a new iron and steel industry in Western Australia, something that will revolutionise that State. These things have been discussed, and agreed upon, and put into motion in the last few months.

In South Australia - you may see, perhaps, the line of the Murray - the great problem, I believe, in South Australia is the problem of water. And although the Snowy Scheme on which we spend so much every year has, I believe, assisted the supply of water in the Murray, we now have under discussion with New

South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, a new dam about here, at a place called Chowilla. And in relation to that - which if it goes on, and I believe it will, will be the biggest water storage in Australia - we, the Commonwealth Government, have found, or will promise to find, a quarter of the estimated cost - just as we found a quarter of the cost in the case of the Hume dam and other works on the Murray.

Now that just gives you a sort of broad conspectus of it. But there is a very interesting aspect of it that I want to point out to you. My opponent, Mr. Calwell who, I must say has an admirable faculty for coining a phrase every now and then, likes to refer to my Government - and I suppose to me - as "tired and lazy". Well I think that one is entitled occasionally to be tired, but laziness is not something that I am accustomed to being accused of.

Anyhow he says this is a tired and lazy government, and it's time you had a change. And here is the point that I want to make: In the last three months of this Parliament this "tired and lazy" Government, instead of deferring works so that it could promise them in a Policy Speech, got on with the job - negotiated with Queensland, negotiated with New South Wales, negotiated with South Australia, negotiated with Western Australia. And the result is that in these last few months of this Parliament we have put in hand, so that they will go roaring along for the next three years at least, the works on the coal ports, the Mount Isa Railway scheme, the great iron and steel and railway and iron ore scheme in Western Australia, the dieselisation of certain railway lines in the State of South Australia, the preliminary discussions on the technical level for the great new dam at Chowilla, let's see, yes, the beef roads up here, the beef roads in Queensland. I could, perhaps, if I had time talk about half a dozen matters which, literally, have been brought to their final stage of preparation, to the stage of agreement, to a stage where the financial arrangements are made and the work can be put in hand, all in the last three or four months.

I hope you will allow me to say that even a Government that wasn't "tired and lazy" might be hard put to it to be brisker than that, or to achieve so much as that in so limited a time. But the work must go on, that's the great point. And I don't believe, do you, that it can go on unless you have a feeling of co-operation, a feeling of confidence, between the Commonwealth and State authorities, between the Commonwealth and the local authorities and the great private enterprises which have so much to contribute to the development of Australia.

It is co-operation, stability of Government, certainty of purpose, a willingness in a Government to go straight forward with these jobs, these are the things that matter, these are the things that will be determined by your vote on Polling Day.

Therefore having given you this very trifling survey of some of the things that are going on I leave it to you to instruct the Parliament of the Commonwealth, through us, that this work is to go on, and that Australia is to be bigger and better; in other words that we shall, as you may see on the corner of the map, be building for tomorrow.

---