

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE RT. HON. R.G.
MENZIES, AT OPENING OF T2 POWER STATION, ON
5TH MAY, 1962

Sir, colleagues, Your Excellencies, and ladies and gentlemen:

It is only a few days ago that somebody was talking to me about the great art of speech-making, and in my usual dogmatic fashion I said to him "Of course the essence of it, old boy, is to get as close to the audience as you can, so that you are on easy and even intimate terms with them". And here I am today, feeling remarkably elevated for the first time since last December.
(Laughter)

There is one other thing that I ought to tell you. When I have concluded my few remarks my instructions are to pull a switch. I see that it has on the switch that it was used by my wife in opening Tumut 1 and I am therefore very sorry that the doctor has prohibited her from being with me this afternoon. But, I have been warned by Sir William Hudson, who, under the direction of his wife, manages this enterprise, (Laughter) that when the switch is pulled there will be a certain amount of mystery go on down below, and then there will be the most deafening noise, and I am instructed to warn you all to remain quietly seated: there will be no occasion for panic, because he assures me that the whole thing has been tested and that it will work. So that tremendous noise which will occur when I pull that switch, will of course, be understood by you and will be gratefully received by me as a substitute for applause.(Laughter)

Now, ladies and gentlemen, this is really, as I don't need to tell you, a very remarkable enterprise. It has so many aspects that one could speak for two hours and not deal with all of them. But this is a very remarkable undertaking, with various facets some of which are occasionally forgotten. This enterprise, first of all, began as an imaginative conception, a conception which was operated, which was put into existence, by my predecessors; and I always acknowledge the imaginative effort that they engaged in when they established the Snowy Mountains Authority. It so happens, by the circumstances of politics, which do change from time to time that my own Government has had the opportunity of enabling the taxpayers to find the money to be spent on it, and in large licks. Senator Spooner, as he admits, has been the Minister for 11 years, the Minister in whose parish this comes. I tell you that his persistent attempts to get more from the Treasury than he really expected to have excited my warm admiration. And it is because I have very frequently come down on his side that he has this high opinion that he has been expressing to you today. He has been an enthusiast.

But the whole point about this enterprise is that everybody connected with it is an enthusiast. Sir William Hudson is a quiet man. In Canberra he seems almost a shy man; it is very hard to draw him out at all, a most retiring fellow. Who has ever flogged an enterprise of this kind along in the fashion in which he has done? The moment you meet him and step into a car and find yourself driving into the domain of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Authority he becomes a dynamo himself. He conveys his enthusiasm to whoever may be with him; he conveys his enthusiasm to a very remarkable team. And my one attempt, which failed, with my colleague Senator Spooner, was that when he said that he wanted me to open this Power Station I said "Well I look forward to the time when we will have Sir William Hudson open a Power Station". Frankly I think he should have opened this one. Therefore, as I have had this task put upon me I esteem it my duty to say, not for the first time, that Australia will never adequately understand the debt that it owes to this man, and to those who have worked with him. (Applause)

My colleague said something about wives. Wives are very important: none of us would be here but for wives. But Lady Hudson is herself, again, the embodiment of the women, the wives, who have contributed to the success of this scheme - a very wonderful success, and a wonderful contribution.

Now, Sir, there are other aspects of this Snowy Mountains Scheme. We think, perhaps, we who live mostly in cities, think of it perhaps mostly in terms of power, electric supply - and of course it is quite true that it makes a tremendous contribution to the supply of power in two States. But it is easy to overlook the fact that in the course of creating power it provides vast storages of water, and facilitates the ultimate irrigation of many hundreds of thousands of acres of land. And if there is one thing that is clear in Australia it is that for the purpose of diversifying the products of the soil, of attracting population into rural areas, developing export trade on the grand scale, the spread of irrigation is an immense contribution. I think I am right in saying, but I speak subject to the correction of the experts whom I see here, that already in New South Wales and Victoria something of the order of 3 million acres of land are under irrigation. This is a tremendous contribution to Australian production, to Australian population, to the Australian future. And this great Scheme is going to replenish, and add to those resources, and therefore bring that tremendous piece of benefit to Australia.

You see the duality of this thing? Power, yes, primarily for the cities. Water, yes, primarily for the country. Here you have something that comes in aid of primary industry, of secondary industry; indeed, that comes in aid of the whole economic development of Australia.

Then, and here I do no more than repeat something that has been well said by my colleague, this enterprise has itself not only created things, the kind of thing we see today, the next great step, but it has also served as a remarkable nursery of talent. Think of all the young engineers, think of all the young technical people, who have been working on this enterprise; and who, in due course, go out from it and enrich the technical and engineering life of Australia with the product of the skill, some of which, a good deal of which perhaps, they acquired in and around these mountains. And our contractors in Australia, some of whom are now becoming extraordinarily competent and prominent, have, I venture to say, learned more in a few years about large-scale contracting and engineering works, learned more in a few years by the example of world-famous enterprises, than they might otherwise have learned in a quarter of a century.

So that this great Scheme enriches Australia, not only with power, not only with water, but also with skill and experience; and in the doing of all these things it is opening up a section of Australia which I believe is destined to be one of the great tourist resorts of the world.

Now this means that one must say that it would be difficult to imagine, and certainly difficult to find, any enterprise which had so many facets to it as this one has. Therefore today as I take the mechanical step of pulling a switch, as we celebrate the establishment of yet another Power Station in this great enterprise, let us remember with pride as Australians that this Scheme was conceived and brought forth, has been carried on, has been brought step by step towards its completion, by people of this country, and the people of countries friendly to us, anxious to participate with us, in the development of a great continent.

Sir, I believe that this is, in its own fashion an historic event and I think that all of us who are here today so long as we live will be very happy to think that we were present on an occasion to mark achievements which do so much credit to the country, and so much honour to those who have been primarily concerned in it. Now, having said that, remember my warning, I will pull the switch. I declare this Station open.