

N.S.W. CHAMBER OF MANUFACTURES DINNER
AT HOTEL AUSTRALIA, SYDNEY
ON 31ST OCTOBER, 1962

Speech by the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. R. G. Menzies

Sir, Your Excellency and Gentlemen :

I think this is a splendid toast - Australian Industry. No doubt this is a comprehensive expression. I can dwell on the problems of primary industry, touch lightly on the problems of secondary industry and go to town on the problems of tertiary industry. I think this is splendid. But before I begin to make what you will be delighted to know will be a very short speech - it's all right, the Lord Mayor has stipulated for an hour (Laughter) - Jim Kirby thinks he can compress himself within three quarters of an hour - and so I am going to make a very short speech; but before I do, I would like to make, as I usually do, two preliminary observations.

The first is that I have been here before (Laughter). I can remember one year when profit and loss accounts were rather healthy, when I got a frightfully good reception and another year when I froze in my place and the ice ccagulated around me. (Laughter) But I won't dwell on these things. The fact is that, looking around tonight, I was delighted to find that there are more young men at the Dinner than I ever remember seeing before. (Applause) Now, as your President said to me, this may be merely the result of the old adage that you're getting old when you think the policemen look young, (Laughter) and, of course, to me the policemen have looked childishly young for years and years. I am bound to say to you, Mr. Premier, that when I am being driven through Sydney, your young policemen, no doubt well disciplined by you, always salute me. (Laughter) If I kept a diary I would make a note of that fact. But this is a splendid thing that in this Chamber in a country in which manufacturing is going to be more and more important as the population grows, as the strength of the country grows, you should have so many men who are young men.

I wonder if I could tell you a story about that. I have tried it on somebody. Some of the younger among you may have forgotten that by some accidental circumstance, I was Prime Minister of the country in 1939 - it's only 23 years ago - and I had brought back Sir Brudenell White, that great man, to be Chief of the General Staff. I was sitting in my office at the Victoria Barracks and he came in and we walked into town together. Some of the more travelled among you will know Melbourne. (Laughter) There is a road called St. Kilda Road, Brudenell White and I, he being at least fifteen, sixteen, perhaps seventeen years older than me - were walking in side by side. He, slim and elegant and precise and I, as you might suppose. (Laughter) We had that day been discussing who ought to be given the command of a division, because the War was on. Brudenell white said to me, "You know, Prime Minister, (very courteously) I am a good deal older than you are." And I sort of shrugged my shoulders at that if as much to say, "Well, don't make too much of a point of it", you see. He said, "All I want to say to you is that it will fall to your lot to make many appointments in your time; if you have a man who has the brains and the character and the quality and some experience, never refuse to appoint him because you think he's too young." Now that was brilliant advice. And he then went

on to add with a wry smile, and I remember this because he was killed in an aircraft accident only nine months later, "You know, when I was first the Chief Staff Officer of the First Australian A.I.F., I was thirtyfour, and there have been people so kind as to think I didn't make a mess of it." Now this is something I have always remembered. And that's why, when I walked in here tonight, I was so delighted to feel that, while I have suffered from the older members of the Chamber, year after year, (Laughter) there will be a time to come when my successor will be able to deal with the bright and upcoming and intelligent members of the Chamber. (Laughter) (Applause) Well, that's my first preliminary observation.

My second is this: I haven't been able to size up yet completely who might be here, but I have caught the eye over there of Sir Frank Packer, and I don't think I ought to let the occasion pass, on our first joint appearance in your city, without saying that the challenge for the America's Cup produced for Australia more goodwill, more interest, more enthusiasm, more news in the United States of America than anything else I can remember. (Hear, hear) (Applause). I was naturally a little hurt by all this because (Laughter) Lord knows, I've been through the United States and trafficked with the great and made powerful speeches, year after, year after year. I think the expression is I've never rated more than a quarter of a column. (Laughter) And he got two columns a day, in every newspaper. Frank, it's a fair thing to say to you, on behalf of all of us, that we are very grateful to you and those associated with you for this marvellous piece of enterprise. (Hear, hear) (Applause)

Having said that, Sir, I come back to my toast - Australian Industry - and as I said, it's a tripartite affair, but of course I know that at heart most of you are manufacturers and therefore you are properly and profoundly interested in secondary industry. There is one thing or perhaps two things that I want to say to you about this.

First of all, as for the attitude of Australia to manufacturing, the issue is closed. Every party at every phase in modern Australian history believes in secondary industry and believes in a policy of protection. (Hear, hear) (Applause) I am so old now and doddering that I can remember a time when people actually argued about protection and free trade. It seems interesting to go back on it. I remember my father in a little country village being the great protectionist. Oddly enough, he won the local seat in Parliament and as his protectionist views became better known, he of course lost it. I don't need to pursue that line any further. But all those old false issues have gone. I don't think any man would be game to stand up in any Parliament - Federal or State - and say that he didn't believe in an effective measure of protection for effective Australian secondary industry. And it is there. And so that is where we all stand.

But perhaps we occasionally have a temptation to look at our section of industry and to think that you can look at it in a watertight compartment. "Well, I'm a manufacturer and this is my prime interest and we have, inevitably, differences from the primary industries and the secondary industries; of course, in particular, from time to time, with the Government" (which always means the Government of the Commonwealth) (Laughter). Now, gentlemen, all I want to say to you is this. The time has come in Australia for us to realise that our common interests are much superior to our individual interests. We are really moving into a new phase of our history. I don't want to make some contentious speech

about the Common Market but anybody who reads the news will know perfectly well that, in all probability - let's put it that way - Great Britain is going into the Common Market, and that Great Britain and the Six who are there now feel that one of the great strengths about the Common Market will be that they will have an enormous home market and that therefore they can increase their efficiency, their turnover, reduce their costs on the goods that they sell to the rest of the world, including Australia. This is where manufacturers come into this picture. Now this is, I think in all probability, going to happen.

Whether what we have read recently improves the bargaining position of Great Britain or not, I don't venture to say, except privately, but I think the truth is that this enormous modern development is going to occur and, of course, it presents problems to Australia. Some people think that unless you fall into a passionate state of mind you don't treat the problem seriously. I do treat it seriously. This is a great problem. But the greater the problem, the more real the problem, the less reason there is for an Australian to fall into a panic about it. We have a high tradition, I think, of clarity of mind, and of courage and decision, and we can face these problems - they are great problems.

You may be disturbed about a problem but not depressed. I am disturbed but, of course, I am not depressed. But I do say to you that we have here an enormous problem which we can meet, but we won't meet it if we divide ourselves up into sections and fall back into an idea that if you are going to do something for manufacturing you ought to do it at the expense of the man on the land. This is nonsense because, of course, today if it were not for the man on the land and the export income that he earns, manufacturing in Australia could be crippled almost overnight by lack of imports of raw materials. Therefore, we are all, as you might say, in the same boat and we must increasingly think of ourselves as being in the same boat.

I would venture, Sir, looking around this audience, to say on behalf of everybody present that we all know that if this country is to stand firmly on its own feet in the next twenty years, it must have more and more people. It can't have more and more people unless those people are employed. It can't have them employed unless manufacturing industry and tertiary industry are able to take them up and employ them because more and more, in the rural industries, mechanisation replaces manpower. All this is so true as to be hardly worth mentioning, but at the same time, those who manufacture should, and I know will, avoid the temptation to say, "Well, if you want us to employ the increasing population, you must simply give us protection however high it may go and whatever it may cost somebody else. The truth is that while manufacturing development in a growing economy is vital - and I hope that my own people have shown that in what we've been doing - it is still true that the vast percentage of our export income is earned on farms and stations and gardens of Australia and that we must not pursue policies which price them out of existence. Now that's elementary. Of course it is. But what it means is that perhaps over the next five or ten years, we should not so much think of ourselves as manufacturers with special interests and no connection with the firm next door or primary producers, graziers councils, wool and meat federators, with no connection with the firm next door, or transport authorities, with no connection with the

firm next door.

I believe that what we have to do on these matters is to get together and realise that we have a community of interest on this matter, a community of interest which we will sacrifice at our own peril. And, really, it was having all those things in mind that I recently announced publicly that we were going to conduct, through a competent committee as I hope we will assemble, an investigation into a great number of these matters - not to discover ways and means of pushing the tariff up or pushing the tariff down, not to discuss ways and means of subsidizing some primary industry or not subsidizing it, but to get together on this matter so that we may discover that in this marvellous country of ours, there is a profound community of interest.

We all have, gentlemen, unsuspected capacity for unselfishness, and this is what we must call on, because I am perfectly certain that if over the next decade, and I am happy to assure you that I won't be Prime Minister at the end of that time (Laughter) - this will be a weight off your minds - but if at the end of the next decade, we find that Australia, confronted by new circumstances, strategically placed as she is in this corner of the world, has done great things in developing her own industries, her own markets and increasingly stands on her own feet and has pride without arrogance, confidence without self-assertiveness, this will be a wonderful thing for our country.

Every now and then, as I look at my grandchildren, of whom I have now quite a mob, and they are very respectful to me because the eldest is only nine or ten, (Laughter) very respectful - "Yes, Grandpa" "No, Grandpa". "Is Grandpa very important?" Oh yes, and the answer, of course, "Very. Yes. Yes." (Laughter) But when I am just dust and ashes, I'd like to think that these brats, having come to man's estate and woman's estate, would look at me and look at you at this end of this room and say: "They understood the problem, they knew it, they coped with it and that's why Australia is one of the great, great, countries of the world."

Now, gentlemen, as used to be said in some papers - "Then's my sentiments". And as "them's my sentiments", I am going to ask you all to stand up and drink the health of Australian Industry.
