

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS
OF THE SMALL ARMS FACTORY, LITHGOW,
N.S.W. ON 5TH NOVEMBER, 1962

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

Sir, Ladies and Gentlemen :

I was just making a little precautionary investigation, and do you know, improbable as it may seem, there are cigars in it. (Laughter) As a matter of fact, I don't quite know what I am supposed to do this afternoon. I haven't been given adequate instructions. Usually when I attend something of this kind, I have to declare something open. I won't get out of the habit and, therefore, I begin by saying that I declare the Small Arms Factory to have been well and truly opened fifty years ago. (Laughter) (Applause)

I suppose that on a day like this, a beautiful day in a beautiful setting, one gets the best possible impression of the place and the work and the people, and I would like to say a few words to you about each of those matters whilst I have the floor.

First of all, the place. I suppose that the people who live in Lithgow tend to take it for granted. I don't know. Lithgow has a remarkable history, a history which in itself embodies the development of Australia from one stage of activity to another right down through its time. It was here in Lithgow - I think I am right in saying - that the first iron and steel industry was established, always to be associated with the great Lithgow name of Hoskins. And I sometimes wonder whether it was the fact that this existed and that there was coal here that induced the Government of the day, fifty years ago, to establish this factory, in its initial form, in this place. But the fact is that ever since then, this factory, through all sorts of vicissitudes - it has had its ups and downs in the course of its time - has become increasingly famous for the quality of its work.

Today when I was walking around, I couldn't help rubbing shoulders occasionally with a number of men prominent in engineering and other activities in Australia, all of them feeling pretty amiable, all of them quite prepared to have a friendly word with me - that's not always the case (Laughter) - but all of them taking the opportunity of commenting on the excellence of the work that is done here. I think myself, Mr. Minister, that this not unassociated with the history of Lithgow or the spirit and character of its people. This town has tradition, this town has made a great contribution in its own way, much bigger than its population, to Australian life and Australian development, and they would be very poor people of Lithgow who didn't feel a pride in the fact that here is a place, known all over Australia, a place that has been able to contribute to activities and skills all over Australia. Now, I think that is a matter for great pride, a matter for great celebration.

There are people, of course, in the world - a great number of them to be found in Australia - who are "knockers." Wherever you go, you meet a "knocker". Nothing is any good. Nothing is ever as good now as it used to be. They talk about the "good old days". If they had to live in the good

old days, some of these "knockers", they wouldn't talk about them so much. But they "knock". Other countries can do better than we can at this or that. "Oh yes, this is all right for an Australian enterprise." Such people make me tired. They have never done anything to forward Australia. The people who keep this country moving are not the "knockers", but the doers, the people who get on with it, the people who, themselves, establish the standards and maintain them and improve them. Anybody who went around here today, even in an ignorant state of mind, couldn't come out of it without being proud of the demonstrated Australian capacity for precision work of the highest possible kind. Nothing slovenly, nothing second-rate - you couldn't produce the end result from this factory if anything in the end result was second-rate. Everything in its own way has to achieve perfection, so that in the end, the instrument is, in itself, a perfect and accurate instrument. I think that we ought to provide for some system of government grant to elect a dozen prominent "knockers" every week and make them come up here and walk around. (Applause)

Now, Sir, I have said a little about the place, not enough; a little about the work, not enough; but you all know about the place and you know about the work. I just want to say a little about the people because, here again, there is a considerable amount of misunderstanding in the world. There are too many people in the world who try to create differences when none exist, who try to pretend that everybody lives at all times in a state of discontent. I don't believe that's true. I think, and I have noticed it, going around here today, that this is a place in which the morale is high and the work is good, because the spirits of the people who are working here are good. (Applause) This strikes me as outstandingly a happy place and it is in happy places that the best work is done. Not in grumbling places, not in places in which people live with a chronic sense of injustice, but in a well-run, well-organised, well-managed place of this kind and with people of the kind I am addressing this afternoon, there is happiness.

Therefore, we are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of a works which began in a very small way and I gather, looking around, in a very noisy way, fifty years ago. Today, it is the last word in modernity, increasingly employs a great number of people, makes its contribution to Australian history and to the future security of Australia and does it all in a community and a setting where cheerfulness is the keynote.

So it is a very good thing for a travelling politician like myself to get away from the cut and thrust of Canberra - you may have heard of Canberra (Laughter) - sometimes you may have listened in to the exquisitely courteous exchanges (Laughter) that we engage in at Canberra. It's a good thing to get away from that for a few minutes or for half a day and come up here and see you all and be delighted to be with you.

Now, before I sit down, I will just make one more comment. How is it that if I were here to make a political speech, I wouldn't see any of you chaps at all (Laughter) (Applause). Well I understand that but, anyhow, you get the point. I am happy to tell you that political speech or no political speech, I will be delighted to have this, made on the premises, as a souvenir of this event and each time I look at it and open it or have it ratted by one of my friends who wants a cigar (Laughter), I will look back to this day and remember how many beautiful, magnificent electors there were, to whom I couldn't address a solitary word on the policy of the Government.