

OPENING OF THE SIRINUMU DAM, NEW GUINEA
7TH SEPTEMBER, 1963

Speech by the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Sir Robert Menzies

Your Honours, the Judges, Ladies and Gentlemen :

I remind myself of nothing quite so much as the man in one of the fables, that my learned friends will remember, of the young junior who was appearing in a case with a leader whose capacity he doubted. This, of course, is not a unique experience and he decided therefore that he would have to follow his leader in the argument and that he would argue - I won't be technical about it - Point A and then he would argue Point B and then he would laugh the case out of Court. And fired with these ambitions, he sat there and he listened to the old fellow who, after a while, began to receive some very awkward questions from the judges - and they seemed to the junior to be very difficult questions. The old boy handled them rather well. As time went on, the junior began abandoning the idea of arguing Point A; he then dropped the idea of arguing Point B; he then decided that it was unnecessary to laugh the case out of Court, and when his leader finished, he stood up and said in a small voice, "I have nothing to add." Now, my case today is in the converse. I'm the old fellow, I'm the leader so to speak. I have had two juniors operating this morning and, upon my word, I have nothing to add. (Laughter) I would hate to subtract anything from what Paul Hasluck said about me because my wife has been here, she has made a note of it and I will live on this for the rest of my life.

Nor, of course, can I emulate my young colleague, Gordon Freeth's familiarity with technical problems. I'm no scientist, I'm not an engineer - except of a kind - and therefore, most of these things are beyond me. I thought, for example, that this Dam was covered with sheets of steel. I had no idea that they had that other word that Mr. Freeth used about them. But there is one thing that I do clearly understand about this Dam and that is that it will contain a great area of water and quantity of water and when I looked in the book of words I realised that the water area of what now becomes the lake is 3,000 acres and I haven't read a word about it in any of the provincial dailies of Melbourne or Sydney or any other capital city in Australia. Not a word. And the lake at Canberra is only going to be half the size. (Laughter) Half the size almost exactly, and it receives daily dishonourable mention in almost every newspaper in Australia.

Now I mentioned that to you because, you know, a lot of you must occasionally feel isolated. I ask you to remember that there is some virtue in isolation. You escape a great deal of criticism that you might have otherwise received. Well, I don't know whether you would. I don't know whether you need to bother about criticism. I wonder whether everybody here today looks around and remembers occasionally - not in a priggish way, not in a self-satisfied way - but remembers that you are here contributing to the development of a remarkable country; that in one sense, in the modern sense, you are pioneering this country, not for yourselves alone - though we all want to live - but pioneering it for those who are to come for its future. This is, I think, a tremendous reflection, a wonderful thing to have in our minds.

Here we are - we are in a place which must have presented the most tremendous problems to people coming in to do engineering work, and yet it has been done, and in days to

come, people will drive past it or across it, they will have the benefit of the electric power that proceeds from it and proceeds further and further down and I suppose they will get to a stage where they will take it for granted. You know that it can't be taken for granted. You know that this has required and has received effort and imagination. Now that's one aspect of it.

But there is a second point that I would like to put to you. What this country is getting and what it needs is joint enterprise, a feeling of joint enterprise, a feeling of partnership between those who are settlers of European stock, those who are the indigenous inhabitants of the Territory and the people of Australia who between them represent a body of trustees and therefore have the duties of trustees. This is a joint enterprise with all of these three elements bound to work together, bound to respect each other and, I would suggest, bound to believe that the closer their partnership the more permanent it will be. I have a great though inadequate conception of what can be done in this country but I am not unaware of the difficulties that it presents. If we remember all the time that this is a joint enterprise, we would be better off.

For example, as my colleague said to you, don't think of Canberra as being some remote astral body because although remote in terms of distance, it is no more remote in terms of thought than any other place you care to mention. Don't underestimate the duties, the task of a Minister for Territories. You know, most of us - well I'm Prime Minister, I'm the sort of general handyman - but most Ministers have a Department to administer. It may be Tariff - right, he deals with tariff problems. It may be Trade - good, he deals with problems of trade, and so on. If he's the Attorney-General, he deals with the problems of the law and legal administration. But a Minister for the Territories deals with all of these things, they all come within his jurisdiction. He has divisions under him - he doesn't have Ministers under him - but in every other respect he is, on a more limited scale, a Prime Minister of a Territory or Territories with the entire complex of administrative machinery of all kinds. This calls for remarkable talent, great patience, great understanding and I've no doubt a great capacity for sustaining criticism because if you just have one job to do, it is pretty easy to criticise a man who has twelve jobs to do. Always have that in mind.

I said just now that this was a joint enterprise, but I mentioned that it was an enterprise in which were involved Australia, the Administration and the settlers and the original inhabitants of these Territories. Well, it is a remarkable blend. You have here civil servants; you have here people who are engaged in industries of one kind or another; you have here settlers, planters; you have here hundreds and hundreds of thousands of people going right back to a point of primitive existence which the average person in the rest of the world finds it difficult to imagine and yet, everyone of these elements must work together if we are to achieve here what we all want to achieve, not only enduring results but a permanent social and human structure. This will require the co-operative effort.

You know, I don't want to quote poetry at you unnecessarily, but many of you will remember vividly the famous lines of William Blake -

"I will not cease from mental fight;
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land."