

CHAMBER OF MANUFACTURES OF NEW SOUTH WALES,
ANNUAL DINNER, SYDNEY

16th SEPTEMBER, 1964

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

Sirs, Your Excellency :

I am speaking tonight at a great disadvantage. Well, as you know, I usually do. I looked at the programme of the sports, as you might say, and I realised that I was the first. Now that is a position I don't care for, except, of course, in my capacity as a cold-blooded dictator. I am going to be replied to by young Ferrier here who has all the advantage of being able to disagree with me with exquisite courtesy and then Mr. Pettingell who is a strange mixture of a man - he's in the gas business as I am, he's in the manufacturing business for some reason that I don't understand and he's a banker for some reason that, technically, I don't understand. And I thought for a moment he was going to be replied to by John Renshaw and indeed here is Pat Hills here tonight. You think of what mischief he'll make of me! Henry Bolte won't be in the same street! And then my old friend Mr. Herford is going to speak and then Harry Jensen. When I've made a mess of it and even somebody else has made a mess of it, he turns up and leaves us all for dead. Great pity. I regret that he didn't become the Member for East Sydney. And do you know why I regret it? Because I really thought that that would have given us our only chance of fixing him up. You know what I mean. But instead of that - no - no, there he is. Anyhow good luck to him, as long as he lays off this strange idea that Tullamarine is to be the chief international airport.

Do you know, gentlemen, that about a week - eight days - nine days ago, I found that in a moment of sickness when I was in my bed, I had agreed to make a speech here to another Association - The Australian Industries Development Association. So I came down, and I made what you might loosely call a powerful speech and I looked around the people to whom I was talking and I realised with a horrible clutch at the heart that they were just the same gang as I would be speaking to tonight. And, consequently, I am at a very great disadvantage. I admit that with exquisite courtesy..... And so with your kind permission, when I go back to Canberra early in the morning, I will tell Dan Minogue that as a special compliment to him the clock rang. (Laughter)

Now, you members of the N.S.W. Chamber of Manufactures - I hope that's right - have been beguiling or ordering me here for many years and I've had a variety of experiences. I can remember - believe it or not - occasions on which when I stood up to speak the people applauded. This is a very happy memory on my part and I remember on one occasion (I think it must have been in 1952 when we had a painfully unpopular Budget) that I arrived here and walked in and somebody proposed my health in the most offensive possible terms, everybody applauded him like mad. I won't mention him - you all know him - and then I got up to reply and was received with great courtesy by two members who said (slow applause) - well, even two are better than none

from the point of view of the politician and I remember on that occasion - you will remember this Sir, I said that there was a musical comedy coming on in Melbourne which ultimately was bound to reach the provinces in which the theme song, slightly altered for my purpose - was "One Enchanted Evening" "One Enchanted Evening, you will see a supporter across a crowded room....." and that was true, and mind you, you've been much better ever since. I must say that for you. You've had your civilised moments in dealing with me. Therefore tonight perhaps I might have a civilised moment or two to speak to you.

I've been thinking about manufacturing and doing a little manufacturing of my own, no doubt, and hearing about manufacturing and being indoctrinated for a long time, and I said the other night, somewhere else, my earliest political recollection is being told by my father, who strangely enough had great dynamic violence and lack of toleration in his view - not a bit like me. And I remember my earliest lesson at my father's knee - they talk about your mother's knee but it is my father's knee - was that the one thing to be understood in Australia was that we must have manufacturing and we must have a protective tariff.

Now some of you gentlemen may think that in the course of time I've wandered a little off the course, but this is when I was fourteen years old, and at fourteen years old, in my experience, you don't quarrel with your father. Well, that's not true in the case of my own children, but it was in our case. And so from the very beginning of my political life, I've understood something about protection and I've understood something about the reasons for it, but I have never succumbed to the easy arguments which occasionally were produced against the creation of manufacturing in Australia. And therefore I say to you, as I've said many times before, this matter has gone beyond argument. I believe that there are some settled policies in Australia, national policies, policies which are shared by all parties and one of them is that we must do everything we can to develop secondary industry in Australia and in recent years we've added to this. And to develop the capacity of secondary industry to export to the rest of the world.

Now, Sir, this is easy enough to say but I think we've become sophisticated enough, haven't we, to have a look at this and to consider its implications. When I was this small boy of sixteen, short and thin, people imagined that the great argument in life was whether you were a protectionist or a free trader and even later on in my life, there was a great argument as to whether you believed in secondary industry or primary industry as these were two branches of industry fighting with each other. Now I do hope that we've grown out of that. We are now Australians and we are Australians in a country in which farming, grazing, manufacturing, tertiary industries, retailing industries are all engaged in some or other aspect of total national effort. This is the one thing I think that we must now come to learn because I will assume that you are all manufacturers.

Let me therefore at once say to you that being manufacturers you are also the greatest importers in the country - that's right isn't it? Because if you were to analyse the volume of imports into Australia you would find that the bulk of the imports came in as raw materials, and as plant and as equipment for manufacturing industry. And therefore I address you as manufacturers, and I address you as major importers. This is something worth remembering. When I address you as manufacturers and importers, I address you as major employers

in Australia. You can't get this thing off on to particular sections or groups. You are great employers and because you are great employers, you represent a body of activity without which we couldn't have an immigration programme at all.

So I emphasise that - immigration. It is to the lasting credit of my opponent in the Federal Parliament, Mr. Calwell, that he was the Minister who had enough courage to start a major immigration movement in this country after the war. And I have never hesitated to pay tribute to it. But we have gone on with it. And this year, we're importing - that's the right word - we are bringing into Australia a greater number of immigrants than we have for a long long time. They come here expecting to work.

They could not come here without any genuine expectation of work unless we had been wise enough - and you had been wise enough - to develop enormous manufacturing, secondary activity in Australia. Because, of all the migrants who come here, very few go on to the land. The land has succeeded in producing more and more with fewer and fewer people, for obvious reasons. And therefore I've never been able to discuss an immigration programme without saying to myself, "Well, this can't succeed unless we have a great manufacturing programme. Secondary industry and immigration are intimately bound together." And therefore I might describe you not only as great producers and great importers, but as great immigrants, and this is worth thinking about.

You see my point - I want you to give up, if I may say so, thinking about yourselves as specialists in a special field. In reality, manufacturing today has become the general practitioner. You must not regard yourselves as merely concerned with manufacturing, but you are concerned with importing, you are concerned with immigration, and indeed nowadays you're concerned with exporting. I know there are people who think in a rather shallow way - that a little flush of inflation does no harm, it will improve the equities and it will reduce the burden of the debentures - you know what I mean - a little bit of inflation.

In the short run, yes, I can understand that some people, in the short run, will think that a little bit of inflation does no harm, like a little bit of something I would mention in other circumstances. This is not true. In the short run it may be, but in the long run your interests and my interests and all the interests of all the responsible people in Australia depend upon having a reasonable stability of the currency, so that people will save money and not be afraid, so that they will save money for investment and not be afraid, so that the loan market will be healthy, and unless the loan market is healthy I say to you, quite frankly, we will either have to stop a lot of works of development which are vital from your point of view, or we will have to increase taxes to an exorbitant extent. And, therefore, you have in the long run a tremendous interest in the stability of the currency. And then there are two other matters in which you are interested. I've mentioned the others.

If I may say so, Mr. President and Your Excellency, you are interested as citizens, because we have too much disposition, even in our own relatively small country, to divide ourselves into a body of special interest, or a body of special pressure groups. We've only eleven million people. We've never lived in the whole course of our lives in a state of

greater risk than that in which we live today. We have only to look on the map north of ourselves to realise that some of the greatest and most crucial events in modern history are occurring near to us. And we're not frightened of our fears - it's not in our nature to be frightened - but it is essential that in looking at all these matters that are going on, we should remember that we are one people with one vital interest. And, therefore, what I've been saying to you tonight is designed to indicate that we must not just think of ourselves as manufacturers, but think of ourselves as importers, think of ourselves as employers of migrant labour, think of ourselves in a variety of capacities. This is essential, because given Australia is a united nation, we're not going to be easily overthrown by other people.

And that means, Sir, coming to the end of this exercise, that the interesting thing, the obvious thing, but at the same time the uncommon thing, is that we're all citizens of one country, citizens of no mean country. Don't let us take too much time off to argue with some other section or some other group. Let us defend our interests, of course - this is quite right, but let us always have in mind that, whether you're a manufacturer or a farmer or a grazier or even a poor wretched politician, you are subordinate to one great thing - and that is the interest of our country.

Now, Sir, I know this is well understood. I know as well as most people could know how manufacturing industry has understood these things, has worked on these things, and I as the head of the Commonwealth Government am immeasurably indebted to your representatives for the advice that we ask for and receive from time to time. I don't want to underestimate that at all. I hope it will go on more and more and more. But in proposing the health of Australian industry, I would like to make it clear that I am not proposing the health of a foreigner, but proposing the health of something which is in the very web of our national being. Now have I made that clear?

I'm happy, and if I haven't made it clear, you will still be happy to join with me in drinking the health of Australian industry.
