

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN CHAMBER OF MANUFACTURES

ANNUAL DINNER AT ADELAIDE

3RD OCTOBER, 1964

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

Sir, Mr. Premier (I never go in for any of these fal-lals - I just say "Sir, Mr. Premier....")

I wondered when I came here in what guise I was to speak to you - I had no idea that I was a species of guest-lecturer. I thought that I'd probably be able to reply to a few friendly insults in answering some toast, and sure enough, up pops my old friend, Tom Playford - if I may refer to him in such familiar terms to you who know him so little. (Laughter) I think on the whole it would have been better, Sir, if I had said "No, I couldn't come" because Tom Playford has over the trifling period of years for which I have been Prime Minister (a fraction of the substantial period of years in which he has been Premier), occasionally given me some good advice. Sometimes he doesn't bother to advise me; he just says, "This is what I want", and when I say, "No", then....well...I needn't complete the sentence. (Laughter)

But I remember years ago he said to me, "You know, old man, no fellow in our game ever got into trouble for what he didn't say." Now this may seem to you a bit of mere flippancy, but of course, it's profoundly true. It's like the old proverb, you know, about the wise old owl who sat on an oak - the more he heard the less he spoke; the less he spoke the more he heard; why can't some folks be like that bird? Do you remember that? That put into four lines what he put into a single sentence with me. He said, "Never forget: You never get into trouble for what you don't say." Oh well, I think there's a good deal of truth in that, though in my experience what you don't say is frequently reported. (Laughter)

Now, if you don't mind I would like to make another preliminary observation. I was taken this afternoon to the Adelaide Cricket Ground, where I found myself looking at a football match, of sorts. (Laughter) I decided that I was a supporter of South (Cheers) - now wait a moment. I decided before the match began - and for a very elementary reason. They had the same colours as Carlton in Melbourne, who have had a singularly unsuccessful season.

One of the things that was pointed out to me by the Lord Mayor was a clock face - wonderful, superb; there it is - handsome, controlled by electric power - and this would tell you at any given moment how long was to go before the quarter ended, all time off being allowed for. A brilliant piece of mechanism, the electric power no doubt being supplied under the authority of the Premier. (Laughter) And just after half time, the power was cut off, and I thought to myself, "Now what's Tom up to now?" (Laughter) I wouldn't put it past him to have it deliberately cut off and then send me a little note to say, "We can't afford to keep it on all the time. Don't forget there's a Loan Council meeting coming up. You have to watch this chap, you know." I have been watching him in an imperfect way for a long time. And then, of course, he confirmed this, I thought, tonight, because he was referring to electric power and he gave you a broad hint, a somewhat indiscreet one I thought, that by about March or before March, you might expect a reduction in the charges. Then, I suppose, the fellows who run the clock would be able to keep it going for all four quarters during the game.

This is a mere broad hint. You are so accustomed to looking at him as if he were an unsophisticated character - I'm not. And the moment he said, "You might expect a little reduction by March," I thought, "By Jove, I'll have to go back on Monday and tell Harold Holt what to expect in the next Loan Council Meeting." (Laughter)

But, Sir, that's all as it may be. The truth is that contrary to all these rumours, both Sir Thomas Playford and I can talk with a very good will about the development of secondary industry in this State, because he in a great way, and I in my own fashion, have had something to do with it, going back over a long period of years.

He has been a great champion of this State. I never make any secret of my view that this State would be lucky if it ever had another Premier like him for galloping on behalf of this State. (Applause) Mind you, he's tiresome occasionally - yes, difficult occasionally, but always either tiresome or difficult or enthusiastic or demanding, not on his own behalf but on behalf of this State of South Australia, and that is something I can admire and always will.

And indeed, of course, one of the things that you must remember on all these matters is that no Commonwealth Government, though it has major responsibilities in this field, no Commonwealth Government by itself can complete a full improvement in industrial development. It must have in the various States governments with imagination and the willingness to do things that the States can do and that the Commonwealth cannot do.

Our main job in life, a job which everybody knows we perform indifferently, is to create an economic climate, to pursue economic policies that will be sound; to produce, so far as we can by our policies - though there are some things that we cannot control - a state of affairs in which there is a reasonable stability in the price level, a reasonable stability in the value of money, and at the same time a feeling of confidence outside Australia in our future. Now these are great tasks, and we have to do our best in the Parliament of the nation and in the Government of the nation to perform them, and on the whole, looking back on it over the last fifteen years, I would venture to hope not too badly, when I look back on what has happened during that time.

But what I really want to say a little to you about is this. The longer I live, the longer I hold my present responsibilities, the more I am struck by the fact that the day is fast disappearing in which we ought to divide ourselves as if inevitably into groups. We want this - we want this - we want this - it's quite true. I am not objecting to organisations. I am all in favour of them. But if there is one thing that is quite clear today, it is that what we need is a full sense of our interdependence in this country. In the words of the apostle Paul, "We are all members, one of another." Now this is profoundly true.

I have said before and it will stand repeating, that I have lived long enough to remember the days when political controversy in Australia was between the protectionists and the free-traders. I suppose there are some free-traders left in Australia, but not too many, not too many. The day has gone when it was said that there was an inevitable conflict between the manufacturer and the man on the land. Increasingly

it is understood that there is no such conflict, that the man on the land achieves enormous advantages from developed manufacturing industry, and that manufacturing industry derives tremendous advantages, for a variety of reasons, one of which is, to put it quite plainly, that the great exports of primary commodities from Australia to the rest of the world provide every year hundreds of millions of money for imports by manufacturers of raw materials and of plant. Don't forget that. There is a tremendous community of interest.

It is a very interesting thing to reflect that the greatest importers in Australia are the manufacturers, as you all know. The greatest exporters are the primary industries. Under the pressure of events and with some encouragement, the secondary industries are now becoming, as Mr. Allison reminded us, very substantial exporters, and when the day comes that we are exporting the products of our factories, and why not, to a world that is opening up before us, and we are doing that to the same extent as we are exporting wool and wheat and dairy and products and meat and what-have you, that will be the day in which we can say that Australia has a conspicuous example in itself of the balanced economy, which is the best kind of economy to survive the shocks of economic variation. And therefore this is a case of interdependence.

But it goes beyond that. Interdependence all along the line. I suppose this old nonsense that used to be talked about the inevitable conflict between the employer and the employee tends to disappear. I acknowledge with great pleasure the remarkable record of South Australia in this field. But the job is not yet complete. There are still people who appear to think that the solvency and success and profit-making capacity of the employer has nothing to do with his employee, or with the future of his employee, or the welfare of his employee, the truth being, of course, that each is dependent on the other. They have a common interest. It would shock some of the old-fashioned warriors in this field, wouldn't it, to be told that all their interests are in common - and yet they are.

There is another aspect of this matter. You know, I have a very great respect for economists because they're quite numerous and, give them enough chance and they cancel out, and therefore I like them. By the time I have measured one against the other, and the other against one, I find I am at complete liberty to apply my own judgment - and I like this very much. But they will keep on, won't they, Tom, talking about "expenditure in the public sector" and "expenditure in the private sector." And some of you gentlemen here tonight have pursued them no doubt into those tortuous paths, when you look at a budget. You look at it and you say, "Look at the way the public expenditure, the expenditure in the public sector is increasing; that is a great mistake. They ought to cut that down by a couple of hundred millions and have more expenditure in the private sector." Now just let's have a look at that.

What is this expenditure in the public sector? The Premier of South Australia is in course of spending a great deal of money, with which we have something to do, in constructing the Chowilla Dam. Why? Why are these steps being taken with the expenditure in the public sector, mind you, to create this doubling, I suppose, of the water supply of South Australia, water being the greatest non-indigenous commodity that this State needs. Now why is that being done? In order to have the water laid on at the public offices? Don't be silly. In order to give this State and the industries of this State an opportunity

sometimes without much advantage to anybody finds its way into the stock exchange, but mostly finds its way into capital investment in Australia. And some of us are more nervous about this than others, but I don't think that when we come to reflect on it we'll have much real difference among us.

Every time a million pounds comes in, or ten, or twenty, or a hundred or, as in recent years, two hundred, for investment in an enterprise, say, of this kind that we are in (and it's not the only one by a long chalk) - every time that happens, something is created in Australia - an industry, a section of an industry; something is added to Australia - experience, know-how, special skills, special techniques. These are part at once of our national assets, and a few thousand Australians get employment of a highly stable kind. Is this a bad thing for Australia? I don't believe that it is.

I admit, Sir, that I would be much happier if all the people who came into Australia were willing to admit Australians to some share in the equity in the business, some share in the management of the business. This is sometimes done, it is sometimes not done, but we haven't yet reached the point of time at which we can frown at a movement of investment in Australia, because properly considered it is again an example of interdependence.

I don't imagine that Chryslers, I don't imagine that General-Motors, I don't imagine that Fords, or the International Harvester family, whoever it may be, lay out millions and scores of millions in Australia because they have an undying affection for you or even for me. They lay their millions out in Australia because they feel that this is a country with a future, and that this is a country where there is sanity in government, and where there is a reasonable stability in currency and in monetary management. Don't let's overlook that. I don't imagine that any country or any company would be anxious to throw its money into a whirlpool of inflation and instability. I don't believe it for a moment.

Our great task, speaking now on behalf of the Commonwealth, has been to achieve as great a degree of stability as we could and at the same time encourage by national development the greatest degree of growth that we can, and that this has succeeded, I think is beyond controversy. And I hope, whoever is in the government, it will continue.

I am not meaning that we want to live indefinitely in our balances of payments in our overseas reserves on private capital investment. I hope it goes on, I don't want to be entirely dependent on it, but we won't be entirely dependent on it. We have just come out of a year, the past year, in which our record exports were achieved, in which our overseas balances rose to an enormous extent. There will be fluctuations of course, but we are in a very healthy position in our overseas funds, and at the same time, we are attracting the interest of investors, shrewd investors, experienced investors, industrial investors, from other countries, because they see in Australia a degree of good sense and stability and opportunities for the future that, quite frankly, they can't see in any other country in the world.

And so, Sir, all I have to say can be summed up in this fashion. We ought to be jolly proud to be Australians, and we are. We ought to be jolly proud to live in a country which has established enormous records in our own time of growth, of expansion and of solidity. We ought, Sir, to conduct ourselves that we will continue to be attractive in that sense to the rest of the world. And if we keep on doing that, and we keep on realising that we are not just a lot of fragments warring with each other, but that we have all our greatest interests in common, and that fundamentally we depend upon each other in this country, then I believe that the future of Australia is completely assured, and indeed, will exceed anybody's expectations.

And if that's not true, I will rise some day from my grave and shake my fist at all of you!
