

EIGHTH MINING AND METALLURGICAL CONGRESS BANQUET
HELD AT THE ROYALE BALLROOM, EXHIBITION BUILDING,
MELBOURNE

2ND MARCH, 1965

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

Sir, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen :

I think I ought to begin by making a few, small, light-hearted protests. Our great host has complimented the Governor on having been Antarctica. I would go there tonight with the greatest pleasure in the world. (Applause) Why he should be given marks for going there out of a sense of public duty while I would go there out of sheer necessity, I don't quite understand, (Laughter) but between you and me, Sir, I would like to be there.

There is one other little preliminary observation I would like to make. Your President made yesterday a somewhat ill-reported but remarkable Presidential address and, unlike many of you, I have read it. (Laughter) (Applause). And I read it with loving care. And in the course of it, he spoke about the constant need for research and development.

Now I agree with this - I am a great believer in this, but while I still have it in mind, what I suggest to you scientific people who insist on innocent victims wearing this uniform (Laughter, applause) is that you conduct a small research into delivering mankind from the constriction of stiff collars and stiff shirts. (Applause) And if you want to give a small prize for the winner of this piece of research, I will willingly contribute £100. (Laughter)

Now I've got that off my chest - my wife had to get it on to my chest - it is an awful business to be the wife of a bad-tempered husband who has to wear these stupid things, but it's almost as bad to have to wear them. However, you've registered the point, haven't you, sir? Old Menzies promised £100 as a prize for the man who could discover how to get rid of them, and I hope all you gentlemen sitting there comfortably and sneakingly in your black ties (Laughter) will support me.

Now, Sir, when I found that I had been once more cast in the role of proposing the toast - and I now do so but I will come back to it a little later - to the Mining and Metallurgical Industry of Australia and New Zealand, I said, "Oh dear me, what have I let myself in for?" And I was reminded that twelve years ago, in this very place, I had let myself in for it. Mind you, it was a better time of the year, the temperature was milder, it was then characteristic Melbourne weather, and I made a speech. Well, as my speeches are not written, I demanded of my long-suffering staff that they should produce a copy of what I said twelve years ago on the remote chance that one of you old boys might remember what I then said. And they had no notes but they said, "It's published in a book" and so I looked up one of those expensive volumes that you sent me later on and there it was - full of misprints (Laughter) but still, I got a rough idea of what I had said on that occasion. And having amended the misprints I find - and this is perhaps something that I want to repeat tonight - that I had said this :-

"The best thing that could happen to this world is that all the great specialists in specialised knowledge should work inside their specialty, should work and sweat so that humanity may know all that there is to be known in that field, but that they should live (they the specialists who work in their specialty) - they should live outside of it, that they should recognise that there is a life outside the work that we do day by day in the course of our own special activities." (Applause)

Now, I venture to say that that was one of my better remarks, suitably edited after I read the book. You know, "he lives for his work" is a good phrase, pointing to the contrast with the clock-watcher, but that we should live only in our specialties is, I rather think, one of the disasters of the century.

I've been around a good deal for a long time and have had a good deal to do with our relations with other countries and the various crises of the world and more and more I find myself believing that one of our disasters is that the cleverer we become, the more scientific we become, on the whole the less civilised we've become.

And the reason is perfectly clear. You may be, as our President is, a tremendous expert in a great dynamic field of knowledge. You may be, as so many of you are, great experts in these fields. And yet if, to you, the only thing that matters is that your scientific and applied scientific skill should be of the highest order and what happens in the world doesn't matter, then the end will be trouble and disaster.

Give me somebody who works in his specialty and who manages to live outside of it - you see the points I am making to you - because while the world has an enormous demand for skill, for science, for expertise - and this demand becomes more and more satisfied, the world has much greater demand for wisdom, for understanding, for a belief in other people as well as in ourselves, and therefore this is one of those cases, Mr. President, on which we have an opportunity of thinking about these things and indeed, Sir, I am not being very original because you, Mr. President, made a speech last night which on its merits should have been published verbatim in every newspaper in Australia (applause) because it was informed, it was wise, it was realistic and it was optimistic. Now mark those last two words - realistic and optimistic.

You know that melancholy fellow you encounter in the club armchair whether it is in Kalgoorlie or in Melbourne - you know, who says, "Well, you know old man, I'm a realist," meaning that he's steeped in gloom (Laughter). "I'm a realist".... well, now let's have realists by all means but let them be like your President, optimists, because that's the best kind of realist, and let us remember in Australia in particular - I don't profess to speak so much on behalf of New Zealand, although New Zealand is here and New Zealand is a great country and is in the fullest sense our blood brother (Applause) - but let us recall - I won't be long - let us recall what has happened as a result of the work of realists who face the facts but who are at the same time optimists who conquered the future.

Well, I can remember when a serious time - many of you may - with a stroke of fortune - when I came back into office at the end of 1949. It was like the old scene in the "Tale of Two Cities" - do you remember when the slogan was "Recalled to Life" and Dr. Manette came out of his cell and came back to London? I was "recalled to life" - if that is the right expression - at the end of 1949.

All I want to do is to remind you of the fact that at that time there was a fixed belief, based on that most pregnable of all foundations, the views of the experts, that our supplies of iron ore were very limited, that we must never allow one ounce to go out of the country. This was at the end of 1949.

As for oil and natural gas - an expression which I must explain to some of our wives relates to something that comes out of the ground (Laughter) - as for oil and natural gas, the whole of life was a big query, wasn't it? People who talked about looking for oil and who went on looking for oil were regarded as amiable lunatics, and today coal.... coal.... When I came back into office, we were importing coal - importing coal - and as the charter party rate at that time was a little high, we paid - if this is the right expression, Sir - we paid through the nose for the coal that we got, and today we're a large exporter of coal.

Tin production was failing, and today it has all the signs of vivacity. Bauxite was imported and today, my distinguished friend on the right, the President, has only two embarrassments about bauxite. Neither of them relates to the quantity of bauxite in Australia. One of them relates to how you get the cash in to develop the wretched stuff and the other is what you do with it when you have it. (Laughter) But look, bauxite - look at Lindsay Clark down there, he knows all about this - but really it is hard to remember, isn't it, that in 1949 bauxite was a somewhat rare imported commodity.

Now there are dozens of other examples but I've mentioned these, Sir, in order to remind ourselves that this dramatic change has occurred in Australia - not because of me; I don't claim to have anything to do with it - but it has occurred in Australia because there were optimists of energy, of drive and of confidence who translated all these things into achievement. Therefore (applause) perhaps all I need to say is this.

I was born - there's no secret about my age - at the end of 1894, and before long whisked off into an old mining city - I mentioned this twelve years ago but you've forgotten - an old mining city called Ballarat, and to us in those days, to us small boys in those days, mining was a sort of memorial of the past. There were old poppet heads, there were old mullock heaps, and in an adventurous mood we would crawl along old drives and suddenly discover we were about to fall in and be lost forever and then, realising our responsibility to history, we came back. (Laughter) But there was Ballarat, the old mining city, the old gold mining city, and so one became accustomed at that time to say, "Yes, Australia...." I'm speaking about Victoria now in particular, Henry. I won't make any reference to what happened in Sydney at a certain stage because this is indelicate, but in Victoria the pastoral age, the gold mining age, the agricultural age, the manufacturing age, all these have followed each other and each of them has brought

its own wave of population into Australia. But when the historian sets himself out to organise this thing in his own mind, I think that he will say that the age that intervened between your last conference and this one is the most dynamic and productive age in the history of our nation. At any rate, I believe so and therefore I say so.

One other thing only, Sir, I would like to say. This Conference is a conference which I think more than any other in Australia or in New Zealand is unique in its collation of practical knowledge and its dissemination of practical knowledge. I had a look through the book of the words - the programme - and really, gentlemen, all I can say to you is that people who do as much work as you do every day on practical matters would never qualify for a convention in San Francisco. Do you know what I mean?

This is a remarkable event and a remarkable conference and I was delighted, Sir, when I heard or read in your speech (because I didn't hear it) your admirable point which we all need to remember that we mustn't go in too much for dividing things into the black and the white, we mustn't go in too much for the false dichotomy to which we are all rather prone, we mustn't say "Either you're for wool or you're for artificial fibres." We mustn't say, "Either you're for coal or you're for oil or natural gas". What we have to understand more and more - and this I thought, Sir, was the keynote of your speech - is that in this modern world we are all, whether we like it or not, interdependent - interdependent internally. Wool, artificial fibres, natural gas and oil, coal - Australia, the new world, the new nations - we are interdependent and we will do very badly if in the course of our work we don't recognise this fact and realise that what happens in the new world, in the new nations, politically immature, economically immature, will not only determine their future but may very easily determine ours.

And therefore, Sir, I want to say that it is a rare pleasure to me to be speaking for a little while at a conference which I believe is directing its mind to some of the greatest problems that we have, not only here but all around the Commonwealth, and I would like to compliment them on having been given such magnificent leadership as you have already given them.
(Applause)

Therefore, Sir, to come back to the right form of the words, I propose, ladies and gentlemen, the health - now let's get this right - of the mining and metallurgical - remember the trouble I had about pronouncing that word - the mining and metallurgical industry of Australia and New Zealand.
