

AUCKLAND

OPENING OF NEW ZEALAND EASTER SHOW
BY MR. JOHN GORTON



30 March 1968

Mr. Co-Chairman, the Right Honourable the Prime Minister,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

You, Mr. Prime Minister, have said you attached some significance to the fact that within three months of assuming office in Australia the first overseas trip taken by me as Prime Minister of Australia has been to New Zealand. But this is, I think, in no way surprising. There cannot be two nations more contiguous than New Zealand and Australia. There cannot be two nations which have in the past forged closer bonds in war and peace and which are now fusing yet closer those bonds which were previously forged. And there cannot be two nations which, if they are given the opportunity to grow as they have the capacity and the will to grow, can more significantly complement each other, can more significantly help the growth of each other, and more enrich the standards of living of each other, and by so doing can more contribute to the region of the world in which these nations live. So it is not surprising that the first visit of an Australian Prime Minister should be to New Zealand, nor is it surprising that that visit should take place quickly.

Rather would it be surprising if an Australian Prime Minister first went anywhere else, or delayed too long before he came to see those whose past and whose destinies are, as I believe, so closely intertwined, and that is why I think there will be now and in the future, not for a person but for an Australian Prime Minister a requirement to be closely and constantly in touch with this nation and a requirement for a New Zealand Prime Minister to be closely and constantly in touch with ours.

This has been an all too brief sojourn amongst you, but during the period of time I have been able to be here, I have had extended to me that hospitality I expected before I came - and I expected much and got much - and have had the opportunity to speak in Wellington to the leaders of commerce, to the leaders in politics, to the head men in all kinds of human endeavour. This, I think, is the first time that I have had the chance to speak to a large gathering of representative men and women of New Zealand, and to them I want to say that I bring in my person greetings from representative men and women of Australia.

We are, as the Co-chairman has pointed out, as a nation an exhibitor in this show and have been an exhibitor for 10 years. We are, I think, the only overseas exhibitor, and from my memory I think we have committed ourselves to continue to be an overseas exhibitor here until the lease of the showgrounds runs out in 1974. We cannot commit ourselves to be exhibitors after that because we don't know what the show and the owners of the showgrounds are going to do, but if they can work things out then you can count on us to continue to be involved. And so we should, because here, and particularly in this division of the show, we see the growth of secondary industry in New Zealand.

Now we, Australia and New Zealand, are competitors in producing the products of primary industry and our markets are, because of that, difficult of access, the one to the other, for primary products, and we are competitors in other countries of the world for the sale of primary products. And we have a balance of trade which is adverse to New Zealand. So how can we overcome this; what is being done to overcome it? I think we can overcome it by endeavouring to open our markets to the secondary products of New Zealand and by continuing to sell in New Zealand our own secondary products, and by expanding the volume of trade from New Zealand to Australia and back, in that way, and in secondary products but not entirely, hope to increase the manufacturing capacity and the markets of each of our nations.

For that purpose we entered into an Australian/New Zealand Free Trade Agreement. This required that, at the time that agreement was entered into two years or so ago, all those products of New Zealand which were duty free should continue to be duty free for admission to Australia, and it required that a listed number of products on which duties were charged when the agreement was entered into would have those duties progressively reduced over a period of eight years until those tariffs too were quite removed and those on that schedule were also freely admitted. The result of that is already showing, because, as your own Minister, Mr. Marshall, pointed out in a press statement last February, in the last half of 1967 the exports from New Zealand to Australia increased by over 40% compared with the exports in the last half of 1966.

And it is being required by this agreement that, by arrangement, in order to help both countries, manufacturers can agree amongst themselves, and governments can endorse that agreement, that something manufactured in New Zealand and brought into and sold in Australia can be brought in and sold without tariff even though it is not on the list of goods to which I have referred, provided the New Zealand Government will grant import licences to Australia for 80% of the value of the goods imported to Australia from New Zealand. And it is provided in that agreement that as it progresses the governments converse with each other and can remove duties altogether before the eight-year period is up, and this has been done on more than one occasion, and just recently on undressed timber, so that last October a decision was made to admit undressed Douglas Fir; and this month another decision to admit undressed native timber without duty, which we calculate, without taking in the factor of growth, will mean an extra one million dollars a year trade for New Zealand with Australia.

Now I know - and I don't intend to traverse this subject too much, because it is more one for manufacturers and perhaps not immediately one which catches the imagination of men and women - I know that not only in the field of secondary industry but also in the field of forest products is New Zealand vitally interested, and this, too, will be discussed between us in a week or so.

But these are mere mechanics of something which we are seeking to achieve between us in the future, mere indications of the paths we are trying to travel, mere hopes that the goals that are held out to us will be reached. Those goals are ones that we seek in the future, and the building we are hoping to start now is one which will reach its fruition in the future, at some time when you are a nation of 20 million people and we are a nation of 50 million people perhaps, and we can together, by what is in effect going to be joint effort through these

kinds of agreements and their working out, see that there are diversified opportunities for employment in this country and in ours, that there are markets in this country and in ours, and that because there is this diversified manufacturing capacity, because there are these markets, because we are both nations which can use technology, we will be able to make and sell to each other things more cheaply than before and in greater volume than before, and from the strength that generates in both our countries will be able again jointly to contribute to building up the standard of the region in which we live. This is a task that I think destiny has laid upon New Zealand and Australia. This is a task we cannot achieve if we hold each other at arms' length. This is a task which is coming nearer to being fulfilled because we are coming nearer together. Some feelings of suspicion in the past, some feelings of worrying about a big brother seeking a takeover, I think are going, and they must go, because that is not the question that confronts us.

The question that confronts us is, how can we, who are not cousins but more like brothers, work together, being so close together - and you, in terms of time and distance are closer to Sydney than is Perth - work together for this end which we have begun now to work for and which I think all - no, not all, but 90% - of the people in my country and in yours wish to see pushed ahead until the goals I have outlined are attained, and wish to see achieved, as a building is achieved in the future, without having it handicapped by problems which arise from some immediate consideration, which are difficulties but which can be overcome if that great structure which I think you want and we want is jointly to be achieved.

Because this show helps towards it, because it gives me an opportunity to speak to those of you who come here, not as heads of great companies, not as members of parliament, not as people in the Chamber of Manufactures, but as men and women from New Zealand, because it gives me these opportunities, and because I think the aims in front of us are so high, I thank the organisers of this show so much for having given me the opportunity to talk to you, to weary you a little with statistics, but I hope to open to your minds a vision. It is because of this that I thank the organisers, and declare this show open.
