

S. C. E. G. S. (SHORE) TRIDENT DEVELOPMENT
PROJECT LAUNCHING DINNER

SYDNEY, NSW

22 JULY, 1968

Speech by the Prime Minister, Mr John Gorton

Mr Presiding Chairman, Mrs Dixon, Mr Headmaster, Member of Parliament, Ladies and Gentlemen :

It is extremely pleasant for me to have the opportunity to talk tonight to a number of people who, for the most part, are directly involved with Shore or, in the case of the female population present, indirectly involved with Shore. The ladies, no doubt, have been regaled with anecdotes of what happened when their husbands were at Shore. I am going to add to some of those anecdotes, if you will forgive me, because I am really a ring-in in a way.

Two or three years at a fairly early age, I suppose, is not the same as staying for the whole of one's education at the one institution, but nevertheless, those two or three years left a number of indelible impressions upon me. As Tim Halstead and some of those others who were with me in the old observatory, which was known as Robson House, will bear out, those were days which one remembers.

I started as a day boy, and that was wonderful, and then as a weekly boarder and that was not so bad, and then as a boarder, and I suppose that was bearable. In those days - and this is quite incredible - there was a system under which a housemaster in charge of a house was paid a certain sum per head per pupil. And anything he could make on keeping that pupil went into his own pocket, with the result that we were fed, but I think that on the whole we would have been able to equate ourselves with "yon Cassius" whom you may remember had a "lean and hungry look".

Tonight I have learnt in the dormitories in this house there have just been installed carpets - is that correct, Mr Headmaster? Carpets. . . . really I don't know what the world is coming to, because my mind goes back to when very large rats used to run over us every night - I assure you this is quite true! - and being young, and with all the things that one has when one is young, we managed to buy ourselves these wire mesh rat traps which we put on the bed. Every now and again somebody would go "Clonk! I've got one!" and we would all rush out and drown it in the bath and watch the bubbles coming up. This is perfectly true. That was the way it used to be and I don't think it really did any of us any harm. But I do remember by contrast between Shore and Geelong Grammar one strange delicacy concerning Shore, which didn't obtain in the later school to which I went.

When one had somehow or other offended authority in Shore in those days, they said, "Walk out in front of the class and get chastised" and they had great canes in those days. They said, "Hold out your hand" and they would beat you on your hand. They were much more indelicate in the later school to which I went. They didn't beat you on your hands at all, though they beat you just as frequently and just as hard.

I am sorry that tonight two people that I remember so well and to whom I owe so much are not here. One is Pat Eldershaw, who was a housemaster of distinction. He is a man to whom I owe a great deal. I am not sure that this wasn't in some way mitigated. You see, he did so well at teaching me in Lower 4C that I managed to be sort of the top of the class and was therefore promoted to Upper 4A, and that left a gap which I didn't understand, and ever since that time, I have never been any good at academic pursuits at all.

I did go to the Headmaster at the time, Mr Robson. . . . I was a very small boy and this was obviously very wrong. . . and I said, "I think you've promoted me too far, I don't quite understand this," and he said, "Take your hands off the desk and stand to attention. You will go where you are told," so I went where I was told. But they were really, in spite of these things - all of which I said are true. . . you didn't believe the rats but it was true - it did no harm to any single one of us. I am positive of that.

The other man who I am sorry is not here tonight is Bingeeye Bell, who is a very lean, tall Queenslander who, when he first came down to Shore from the back blocks wasn't used to wearing boots - you know, Queenslanders weren't in those days, so on every possible occasion, he used to take them off and tie the laces together and hang them around his neck. But he turned into one of the best oarsmen and one of the best boxers and one of the best house captains, and one of the best citizens that Shore or Australia has ever had.

There we were in those days, and so many of you who are here tonight were there with me, when we had education - "reading, writing, 'rithmetic, taught with the aid of a hickory stick". And do you remember we had thirties, the origin of which I never understood until tonight. If you had somehow or other offended authority, you got one thirty and that didn't matter - you just wrote that in a book. If you did it again, you got two thirties, and that didn't really matter. Nothing happened. But once you got three thirties, you had to go and drill under the sergeant. Do you remember? On that asphalt place. for half an hour. If you got four thirties, you had to come back on Saturday mornings. I don't know whether that still obtains. I hope it does because I think it is a good disciplinary application.

Forty years ago there was a completely different approach to education from that which we now have. In some ways, I think it was a little better, because when you did wrong, you got clobbered, and when you do wrong, you ought to get clobbered. But those days lacked the foresight, the attempt to understand the individual character and the individual capacities of the schoolboy. and this is now one of those hallmarks of schools such as Shore, and of our general educational system.

Though I am a little sad - I hope the Press won't take this down, because if they do, it will be misreported - though I am a little sad that discipline and corporal punishment is not as freely used as it was, and instead people are given lectures which are much harder to take, never theless the general approach to education must be agreed to be greatly improved. Where, then, do the independent schools and where, then, does a national as distinct from a state government come into the picture in endeavouring to foster this improvement?

Well, insofar as the independent schools are concerned, I have no hesitation in saying this. . . . that there always has been in Australia a right for people to choose whether they will, at some sacrifice to themselves, send their children to a school other than those run freely by a government. And there always ought to be a right for people to make that choice. It is a democratic right people ought to be able to exercise.

Secondly, there is an educational advantage. I do not say that merit lies in independent schools, or merit lies in government schools. Quite clearly, as the development of education in Australia has shown, there is no monopoly of merit either in the independent or in the government school systems. But I think there would be a danger, if there were to be only one system in a state or in a nation, that that system might become monolithic, and because it became monolithic, might become moribund. Therefore, if there is a chance of a different approach, of a different evaluation, of selecting this method of education instead of that, then that can only be of benefit both to the pupils at independent and to the pupils at government schools. The systems must interact upon each other, as they do, and the independent schools must be prepared to take from the government schools the advances which they have proved, and the government schools are prepared and have taken from the independent schools the advances they have proved. This reacts to the benefit of the children and the pupil. So this again is a reason for the support by governments of independent schools.

I believe that Sir Robert Menzies as Prime Minister, and if I may say so, myself - as his first Minister of Education and Science, and before that as the man to whom he gave the running of Commonwealth intervention in education - have fostered the growth, and the development not only of independent but of government schools throughout Australia. In doing this, we were not only motivated by the things I have put before you. But also by another not insignificant matter, and that is that the economic cost to the community of maintaining a pupil at an independent school of any kind is much, much less than the economic cost to the community would be if all pupils were to go to government schools and all were to be completely supported by government taxation.

So there was not only a democratic, there was not only an educational, but there was also an economic reason why schools such as Shore should be supported and maintained by governments and by those who have received the benefits of attending such schools and who wish their children to receive similar benefits.

This is a great school with a great tradition in one State of a nation, but little less than a fortnight ago, my wife was talking to another great school in Brisbane, known up there as "Churchie", the Brisbane Church of England Boys Grammar School. There are in Western Australia and Tasmania and in every State of Australia, schools such as this, schools with great and long traditions. It is my hope and my belief that those pupils who attend these schools now will be taught that this country in which they live is a nation and no longer a collection of six colonies. . . . and that those who come from Shore next year will in ten years be found working in Queensland, or Western Australia or South Australia, or wherever it may be; and that those who come from Brisbane Church of England Grammar School or from Geelong Grammar School, or wherever, will be found working in New South Wales. . . . because if there is one thing that is needed more than anything else in this nation today in the situation in which it finds itself, it is the

fostering of a national and not a colonial and not a state spirit. And I believe that in schools such as this, and indeed not only in schools such as this, this is the path of the future. But I am not sure, Sir, that schools such as this have not led the way towards such a path.

This is another reason, I believe, why the Commonwealth Government has come into the field of education, come into it not only for the reasons I have already given you but because it is impossible to leave such an important, such a significant field to be developed to different levels in different parts of this nation such as ours. We could not now or in the future exist if we allowed, for example, in Queensland, the standard of education to fall below that in New South Wales or in Victoria, if we allowed the basic standard of education in any one part of our country to fall below the basic standard of education in all the rest.

It is necessary for a Commonwealth Government to come in and see that a child in any part of this nation of ours is enabled to be provided with the facilities that the children in other parts of the nation have. This is why there has been so much more involvement in education by the Commonwealth than has ever occurred before. This is why in the last three or four years the expenditure has increased three and a half times. This is why, more importantly, in the last three and a half years or so, there has been more advice given, more leadership given.

Let us try and get a little bit more agreement as to the curricula between the various States. Let us try and get a little more - not uniformity, because that is not what is wanted - a little more equality of standards between the various States. Let us try and get to a situation where a child educated in one State.... and his parents move to another.... can go to a university in that new State without having to meet special matriculation requirements. This ultimately must be good for a nation.

I think there are only a few things more, Mr Presiding Chairman, I want to say. You will all know that the Commonwealth Government for long has been interested in the provision of scientific laboratories and science facilities in schools - governmental and independent - throughout Australia. Indeed, if you haven't received it, you are going to get another offer of \$5,000 very shortly for your science laboratory's equipment. We have heard tonight from a professor of physics, of the technological requirements of a modern age, and these we can not undervalue, because if our material standard of living is to increase, if our capacity to increase the material standard of our neighbours is to increase, then we must use to the utmost what is discovered by science and modern technology.

But I hope that none of us will ever believe that scientific knowledge and technological knowledge can take the place of proper education, because with a full and complete knowledge of science, two things are possible. You can split an atom so that you can diagnose a disease and cure it where previously it could not be diagnosed and cured; or you can split it so that you can examine the material to be used in building to know whether if it is used that building will stand up under any stress; or you can split it so that from the isotopes you can discover how better to develop the products of your land and the products of your industry; or you can split it so that you can devastate vast areas of land and destroy innumerable populations. Science offers both those alternatives.

Similarly with technology. You can use it so that you can the better produce, so that you can with a smaller number of people and greter machinery, turn out more and more, or you can use it so that you put your efforts into creating engines of destruction.

Now what is going to decide whether scientific knowledge is used for the good or the bad? What is going to decide whether technological advances are used to improve the lot of all of us and of our neighbours, or to hold fears over the head of us and of our neighbours? Is true education the study of history because that shows us the problems which men have had to face throughout the ages in trying to organise a society, and how in one way or another, with this degree of success or that, they have managed to overcome those problems, and how something which at first seems a panacea has been tried and has not been successful. Or is true education a study of religion, because that breaks the shackles of the present and makes us look to the ultimate goal we all seek, and that has particular application to a church school. A study of literature, perhaps, because that shows the dreams and aspirations of the individuals who make up a nation, half expressed or fully expressed, according to the capacity of the literary figure one studies. And the study of politics, which shows the duty owed by a citizen to the community in which he lives, the duty not only to receive from it, but to give to it. These are the aims of true education,

Fully understood, these will see that scientific and technical knowledge is used for the furtherance of those aims and not for the destruction which they make possible. Could anything be more important than seeking to see that the forces which are now unleashed through science and technology are through true education properly used? Can there be any better way of seeing that this true education is provided to one's children than by giving to schools throughout Australia the capacity to see that in this way we become a great nation. This, I think, is what this dinner is all about because here, in a small way, in one school, we can a little advance the aims I believe we all have for the nation of Australia.
