

68TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF
WEST AUSTRALIAN CHAMBER OF MANUFACTURES

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PERTH, W. A.

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Speech by the Prime Minister, Mr. John Gorton

Mr. President, Mr. Premier, Colleagues and Ladies and Gentlemen:

This, I think, is the fourth, or possibly the fifth address that I have made today in my visit to Western Australia. It will consequently not be very long and, for those of you who may have been attending any of the other occasions, I daresay it might tend to be a little repetitive.

First, Sir, may I say this. In the course of an address to myself and to the Premier you said rather more nice things than nasty things, which is quite pleasant but not altogether usual, but you did, and for that I want to express my appreciation. But you also raised some interesting points and I know that since you always, quite properly and rightly believe that it is a good thing for the Chambers of Manufactures and others to tell governments what they ought to do, so you would not object too strenuously if occasionally a representative of a government suggested to Chambers of Manufactures what perhaps they ought to do.

This may have a little more relevance to this particular State of Australia at the present time than it would have for many others. You raised the question quite early in your speech of Commonwealth/State financial relations and how important they were, with perhaps some tinge of a suggestion that Commonwealth/State financial relations ought perhaps to be revised. But you went on to say, and to say quite properly, that the developments that are taking place in this part of the nation today call for vast amounts of capital from overseas and also call for large amounts of capital from the State Government. And, you will agree with me, I am sure, that the level of those requirements is far more than this State Government could raise from the resources of this State and from the taxpayers of this State, if those were the only resources on which they could draw.

If you would agree with me in that - and I think it is incontrovertible - then there is one thing at least about Commonwealth/State financial relations with which you must agree. That is a system of uniform taxation throughout Australia under which an Australian Government collects all the income tax available and under which an Australian Government provides for the states that are developing and that cannot from their own resources get all that is needed. . . . this system cannot but be for the good of the smaller developing states.

This is an argument, as I have said earlier today, which is not always received with universal approbation in states like New South Wales and in Victoria. But if this Chamber of Manufactures wants this State to get as much capital as possible to progress, then the system at present in existence is the best and indeed the only one. I hope, Sir, you won't go too far in endeavouring to upset the basis of Commonwealth/State financial relations at present existing.

You also mentioned the recent completion of the railway line, which I think was opened the other day, and just as you gave credit to that former product of Western Australia, Mr. Snedden, for pushing ahead with the immigration policy, so may I be allowed to give credit to that present product of Western Australia, Mr. Freeth. He didn't begin this project because it was begun by Mr. Opperman, but ever since, almost ever since its inception, Mr. Freeth has been engaged in seeing that it was done at not more than 300 or 400 per cent above the initial estimate for the cost of the railway!

You have spoken, too, of your problems, not least the problem of labour, and you will I know - you and the other manufacturers here - realise that in examining this two thoughts are thrown up. One of them is - and this is true for the whole of this nation and not just for this State - that if all the labour one has available is in employment, and by and large throughout Australia, all the employable labour is in employment, and if all the material resources that can be produced are demanded and are used, then, Sir, it is no use merely saying let us have more money and then we can do more things. Because if that were acceded to, the sole result of providing more money, all labour being employed, all material being used, would be to push up the price of labour and push up the price of materials and not in fact to get anything more done.

It may well be that resources should be diverted from something to something else, but when all resources are used, that is the only way in which some new things can be done, and you as manufacturers would know that.

The second problem, as you mentioned, is one for which I think all in this room, in a way, would be grateful, and that is that you are facing the problems of growth. Now, the problems of growth can be quite uncomfortable, but surely they are more exciting than the problems of stagnation or the problems of decay. Surely there is a knowledge that in applying new managerial techniques, and if it is possible - and I am not suggesting it for a moment - better managerial techniques to manufacturing processes, then this helps to overcome the problems of growth, and once that is overcome then new ones will arise because new growth will immediately evolve. Indeed, new growth will evolve here and nothing can stop it. But since it will evolve here, since nothing can stop it, then here is a very great responsibility, not only on governments but on those charged with the management of factories, on those charged with the supervision of the production of the goods. It is a responsibility to see that in the circumstances in which we find ourselves, every possible effort is made to ensure that these goods are produced in the most efficient way and with the most efficient management. I am sure you won't mind me saying that to you. As I said earlier, this appears self-evident.

You mentioned another matter, that of tertiary education, particularly tertiary technological education, and with what you have said - with one exception - I completely and utterly agree. And I know, because I have worked with them on this, that your State Government completely and utterly agrees. You have created here in Western Australia in your Institute of Technology, which we now call the College of Advanced Education, a technological institution separate from the universities, which is a blue print for this kind of institution throughout Australia. You have given it, your Government has given it autonomy. The courses in it will provide the sort of people whom you said manufacturers wanted. There is no reason

in the world why sandwich courses of the kind that you suggested should not be provided there and every reason why they should. And if there is to be some argument about whether the end product of this, the man who is the end product, should be given a degree or a diploma, well, that is an argument for another time and another place. What really counts, surely, is not his description at the end but what kind of an education he has had, what kind of a product that institution produces and what kind of a judgment you people in this room make of that end product. Because that judgment will be translated into employing that end product at a remuneration you think he is worth, and if he is worth what I believe he will be and what I think you believe he will be, then these institutes will be, as far as parents are concerned, something which will take the place of universities, not altogether, but for those better fitted for this kind of education.

Sir, it is an exciting thing to come to Western Australia. You can be sure that there will be visits from me as long as I may be destined to remain Prime Minister, not only annually, but more often than that, just as in the past I have spent so much time here, either as Minister for the Navy or as Minister for Education. But because I have been here so much in the past, because I helped to start - because I did start the Leeuwin Naval Station, because I worked so closely in the Institute of Technology and the Secondary Teachers' College and the science blocks and the technical schools which jointly the State and ourselves built here, I have been able to notice the increasing tempo of development. And on this last quick tour of your North, it was for an Australian - I would not claim to be a West Australian - for an Australian a most exciting thing to see what is happening in Hamersley, in Mt. Tom Price, Port Hedland, in Dampier, Kambalda, in all the places that you know so well. It was exciting not only to see what is happening but to feel in the air the vibrancy and the forward-looking drive which is so evident and which has as one of its results the growth of Perth and the growth of industrial opportunities for those of you engaged in manufacture in Perth.

Not only does this feeling of excitement exhilarate the spirit, but it makes somebody charged with the conduct of the nation's affairs realise more fully how much overseas exchange is being earned by what is going on - here, and in Queensland, and in the Northern Territory and in other similar places. But here tonight I speak of Western Australia - of how much this contributes to our defence capacity because so much of what we buy for defence purposes now - I am sure less in the future - but so much of what we buy for defence capacities now is bought from overseas, has been bought from overseas, calls for overseas exchange, which on current account we cannot earn, but which the overseas earnings you are making will help us earn. This overseas exchange contributes to our capacity to help the nations closest to us because there again it is an expenditure of overseas funds which we use in order to try and raise their living standards for purposes of humanity and I suppose, if the truth were to be told, ultimately for purposes of our own. Because as their living standards rise, so will their markets become more available to us, so will their demands for our products rise, so can we join together with them in trying to improve the general prosperity of the whole region.

So do we realise what is being done to help to build the population which we must have, and must have as quickly as possible, possibly for survival, certainly for arrival at that future which still lies before us.

So these things, these things which contribute not only to what I have spoken of but, as I am sure you West Australians would be the first to agree, to contribute to the capacity of factories in Eastern States to grow and to use the foreign exchange so earned - though they earn a little themselves, you know, from exports, from mining oil and from things of this kind - but it does contribute as a whole. You would agree with that and so would I. But its importance - I hope this has come a little out of what I have said - is not an importance confined to this part of Australia, but because of the things I have just enumerated, an importance to the nation of Australia which, on the whole, I think most of you here, if not all of you here, would regard as being greater than any single part of the nation.

Having said that, I ask you also to remember this. What you have done and what is happening here contributes, what happens in Queensland contributes, what happens in Bass Strait contributes, all of it together is going to build all of us together into a nation in which your manufactures are wanted, but that is just a small part of it. I know each one of you here wants to increase his factory, wants to increase his production, wants to improve methods, but I don't believe that that is the basic drive of any human being or of any Australian. Necessary? Yes. Basic? No. I think you want to do these things for a purpose, and that purpose is to feel that as you increase your production, as you improve your manufactures, as you improve your factories, so you are not only getting benefits from this yourselves, but so you are contributing to the sort of life your children can lead, the sort of nation you want to see. You want not only the satisfaction of achievement but the satisfaction of contribution.

This, I think, is happening here. This, I think, is happening throughout Australia. How it may best be continued must, of course, be a subject of debate and it would be a pity were it not. All kinds of suggestions, Sir, I have no doubt will come from you as the President of the Chamber of Manufactures or your successor, and will come from other presidents in other states. Some of them will be sensible. Some of them may be open to question. Governments themselves will make suggestions. It is possible that some of them may be sensible. It is certain that they will all be open to question.

But one thing I am sure of, and forgive me if perhaps I am just a little personal as I conclude on this note. For somebody who does have a responsibility to try to see that we follow the proper path in Australia economically and in other ways, there are from time to time burdens, there are from time to time decisions to be taken which one cannot be sure are correct decisions because there is so much on one side and so much on another and one has to balance and take a choice. But the sustenance of somebody who has to do that is very great because it comes from the Australian people who I have found have been willing to accept honest mistakes, have been willing to support what they believe to be honest policies, have been in fact thoroughly decent as one would expect the Australian population in general to be.

With this knowledge, and with this experience, I can but tell you this, that the Commonwealth Government, with the State Government, listening to but not necessarily taking all advice offered will do what we can to make proper judgments, to choose the priorities we think are right, to put on one side, if necessary, things that ought to be done but which cannot yet be done because things clamour with more need on the other

side. And I am certain that we will altogether go ahead, not in all parts of Australia perhaps as quickly as we are going in the West now, but in all parts go ahead, and that on the path on which we are moving, we will, step by step, arrive as a nation which for strength and industry, for compassion to its ill, for moral approach to world problems. . . . well, perhaps, be a nation better than has been known before.

These words were written some time ago:-

"All of the past is prelude."

Sir, I translate that in my own words: for Australia and Western Australia, I translate:-

"All the past is prelude."

into:-

"You ain't seen nothing yet."

And you haven't.
