

OPENING OF CASEY WING AT ROYAL MELBOURNE
INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, MELBOURNE

2 JUNE 1969

Speech by the Prime Minister, Mr. John Gorton

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Education
You were kind enough, Mr. Chairman, to mention an early association of mine with this concept of Colleges of Advanced Education. And indeed it was, I think, a bold and new experiment to start such colleges and to make them - not competitive with universities, not on a collision course with universities - but turning out people with the same graduate standards as the university could turn out, and with a slightly different motivation in their education. So many of them, unfortunately, (because I heard what some had said in the back previously) destined, I am afraid, to become bourgeoisie.

And, indeed, Mr. President, the time had come in Australia when this new experiment should be begun. We are going to have, between 1967 and 1972, 50 per cent more students staying in matriculation forms at secondary schools and then coming on to tertiary education. And what we see here in this building is not only the beginning of a ten-year plan of great significance for this RMIT College of Advanced Education, but is an example of what is happening through the length and breadth of Australia in these kinds of institutions. So that in Ballarat, in the Gordon Institute of Technology, in Bendigo, in every capital city from Rockhampton to Kalgoorlie, these buildings are going up to serve the requirements of students who want practical education as well as liberal education and to serve the requirements of this nation now and in the future.

Mr. Chairman, I think that in the last four or five years or so, there has been a great advance in the provision for education in Australia. We have, for example, taking the Commonwealth Government alone, reached a stage where we are providing \$17 a head of population for education, whereas some years ago it was \$4.5.

The capital requirements alone for buildings such as this, for universities, for science laboratories in schools, for libraries in schools totalled some \$248 M., and adding in all the scholarships that have been brought newly in or expanded, the Australian Government, without mentioning State Governments, is spending some \$210 M. a year on education. Indeed, Mr. President, I can say with some pride - to quote a phrase I seem to have read some time ago - that the Australian Government is "poking its bib into education" in quite a significant way and to the good of the nation as a whole.

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Mr, President, it was some eighty years ago, I believe, that Francis Ormond started this College and set the ball rolling, and at that time trade unionists subscribed half a crown a head to the capital required to begin what has now grown and is now growing into a magnificent institution. And half a crown a head in those days for a trade unionist was no small sum of money. It must be as much satisfaction to you, Sir, as it is to me to see that on the Representative Council of this College the Trades Union Council is still represented, and may it continue to be so represented.

We will not really know in Australia what the end results of this will be for some few years. We must wait to see what the reports are, coming back from industry in Australia. But that there is a requirement for this kind of education cannot be argued against. Let's take one example only. The Mining Industry Council just recently pointed out that there would be a need for twice as many engineers in 1972 in Australia as there is today, and these, these practical engineers must come from colleges such as this. That is but one example of the requirements of technical education which must be allied with a liberal education at the same time.

Sir, you are not, as I said before, embarked on a competitive or a collision course with universities. Rather you are developing an alternative system, and I believe it is up to everybody sitting here today, and indeed everybody standing here today, particularly if they come from this college and not from outside, to endeavour to sell as hard as is possible the great requirement for graduates from this kind of college and the great contribution they can make to our national life.

But it does not, it must not mean that the education here provided is narrower than the education provided in established universities. All it means, and what it must mean is that the twig, as it were, is being bent so that it grows into a great strong tree of as great significance and able to contribute as much as can any tree grown on any established university campus. This is something new and an example of progress that is happening. But it is only a beginning. It is, of course, only a beginning in the active development of educational systems in Australia generally.

We are here, I think, breaking out with this concept from the conventions of the past, from the conventions applying to education in the past, good though they were, strong though they must continue to be. Nevertheless, new times demand new thinking and new ways, and from these colleges new thinking and new ways will, I believe, come. This we are trying to provide but its success will depend on those going through the colleges and what they get out of them and what they will contribute to the nation after they have finished.

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Mr. President, I believe that this college can do a great deal to see that the concept is successful. And I am delighted to see that your Department Advisory Committee includes representatives of all branches of industry, because this will help to spread throughout Victoria what the Victorian Government, our own Government and you are trying to do.

Sir, I believe this - that from this new concept will come students with the skills we require, the more highly developed skills we require and the cultivated minds that individuals require so that they will be able to go out into the nation and work in a field they wish to work in, in which they can develop their own personality, in which they can contribute to their own satisfaction and to the growth of this country to which they belong.

I now declare this building - the Casey Building - open.
