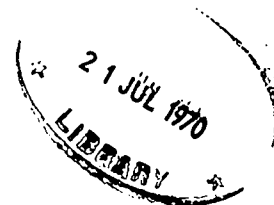


OPENING OF NORWICH UNION HOUSE  
SYDNEY N. S. W.



2 JULY 1970

Speech by the Prime Minister, Mr. John Gorton

Mr. Ramsay, Distinguished Guests from Overseas, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am glad to be here this afternoon to croak out a blessing on this new building. It is particularly appropriate, I think, considering the way I feel this afternoon, because if I feel the same way tomorrow afternoon, Sir, you are likely to get a new policy-holder. They call it Asian flu. I think it is probably a bit of a reflection on Asia. But whatever it is, you have had it and I have got it.

As you say, Sir, I do seem to be having quite a run of Openings this week. Tullamarine airport one day - I hope you will continue to call it Tullamarine, and today one new building pointing to the skies and adding significantly to what is already an exciting skyline in Sydney.

I think that both these occasions remind us of the expansion going on all around us in Australia today which will, I am sure, continue unabated through the decade that lies ahead of us.

Now, it is quite right, Mr. Ramsay, that in Melbourne one indicated that the enterprise one was opening would continue to work for twenty-four hours a day. And I am not going to take your advice as to Norwich Union employees, because unless I miss my guess they are so widespread throughout the world that there is not one hour of the day when some Norwich Union employee is not working somewhere to write some policy for the betterment of humanity in general.

Sir, this Company has had an active association with Australia, going back for more than one hundred years and I am happy in the presence of your London Principals, to acknowledge your company's established place in our highly competitive insurance industry, to acknowledge its service to its policy-holders, and to acknowledge its contribution through investment to our national development. It is a mutual society. It is a society where the profits do not get siphoned off, but where those who are policy-holders share in the growth of the enterprise, and where the country in which it is established shares in the growth of the enterprise, because as I am sure you know, Sir, some thirty per cent of investments of funds made by insurance companies are required by law - which some people think is wrong, but I think is at least convenient, to invest thirty per cent of their funds in what I will call developmental activities so that it can help the building of schools and roads and hospitals and all the other matters which both State and Commonwealth Governments seek to bring to the people of this country.

...../2

So it is not just something which is a business - although of course it is a business, but is something which helps the community in which it is established and that, Sir, is saying something of some magnitude because the rapid expansion of the insurance business in Australia is a very clear reflection of the health and growth of Australia and is of no small magnitude. I understand that life insurance investment in Australia now exceeds \$5,000 million and is increasing at more than 10 per cent a year and we are delighted that this should be so, we are delighted that you should be building up your own enterprise in this way, not seeking as happened some time ago, to take over an Australian life company in the process. I quote those figures because of the importance which I do attach, and which we do attach, to insurance funds in Australia because of what I have already spoken of as the great contribution it makes to investment, to Australia's progress.

Now I do have some statistics here which may be interesting because I am told that we are one of the world's most insurance-minded countries, and that taking the ratio of premiums to national income as a guide, we rank second with Canada in all the countries of the world, with America being the leader, and if you take dollars per head spent on premiums, then we rank fourth after America, Canada and Switzerland. For those who are interested in precise figures, which I imagine, Sir, insurance people are, the exact figures in United States dollars spent per head are: United States \$277, Canada \$150, Switzerland \$134 and Australia \$115. As we grow, as we will in the decade in front of us, I have no doubt that we will be rated second and that will be good for you and for your policy holders and for us.

I think that the establishment of this building by the Norwich Union shows the confidence that company has in the future of this nation of Australia. I am certain that confidence is not misplaced. I am positive that in the decade ahead we will grow, and grow more rapidly with each passing year. That we will have our problems, as we do now have our problems, is obvious. We have our problems with our rural industries caught in a cost-price squeeze, the price being unable to be decided by the producer or by this government. We have difficulties which are inherent in the growth of big cities, the rapid growth of great cities, and we have a requirement to give our young people going out to marry a capacity to buy land and houses - not without effort because these things have always required effort and always should, but at least without undue effort, and this is also a problem that is with us now.

But there has never been a country at any stage in the world which has not had problems. We have got them. But the opportunities we have got so far outweigh them that we will, I believe, in the next decade, be almost a transformed nation and will have fully justified Norwich Union's own faith in our future as exemplified by this building which I now take pleasure in officially declaring open.

-----