

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. E.G. WHITLAM, Q.C., M.P.,
AT THE OPENING OF THE KAISER STUHL WINERY CHATEAU, NURIOOPTA
SOUTH AUSTRALIA, FRIDAY 8 MARCH 1974

ONE OF THE MOST NOTICEABLE CHANGES IN AUSTRALIAN LIVING IN THE LAST DECADE OR SO HAS BEEN THE GREAT AND GROWING POPULARITY OF WINE. IT HAS COME HAND-IN-HAND WITH A TRANSFORMATION OF OUR EATING HABITS. WE ARE NO LONGER A NATION OF PEOPLE WHO EAT STEAK, EGGS AND CHIPS, WASHED DOWN WITH BEER. MANY AUSTRALIANS ARE NOW AS LIKELY TO BE FOUND EATING VEAL MARSALA, ACCOMPANIED BY A RIESLING, OR BOEUF AU POIVRE WITH A BOTTLE OF CABERNET SHIRAZ. IT IS ONE OF THE SMALL DISADVANTAGES OF MY DUTIES THAT I AM NOT ABLE TO SHARE THE FULL FRUITS OF THIS TRANSFORMATION. A SYBARITIC LIFE, IT SEEMS, IS NOT POSSIBLE FOR THOSE IN HIGH OFFICE.

IT IS FITTING IN THE BAROSSA VALLEY TO PAY TRIBUTE TO THE TWO QUITE DISTINCT GENERATIONS OF NEW SETTLERS WHO HAVE PLAYED SUCH AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THIS DEVELOPMENT. GERMAN REFUGEES ESCAPING FROM RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION FOUNDED THE FIRST PROFITABLE WINERIES IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA AND THEIR DESCENDENTS HAVE CONTINUED AND EXPANDED THEIR ACTIVITIES SINCE THEN. THE NAME KAISER STUHL ALONE SYMBOLISES THE EFFORTS OF THE MIGRANTS FROM PRUSSIA AND SILESIA WHO WERE THE FIRST SETTLERS IN THIS VALLEY IN 1842.

IT WAS A LATER GENERATION OF MIGRANTS WHO DID SO MUCH TO MAKE AUSTRALIANS APPRECIATE THEIR OWN WINES. SOME OF THOSE MIGRANTS, TOO, WERE ESCAPING RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION - INDEED, THE MOST FEARSOME PERSECUTION THE WORLD HAS EVER SEEN. OTHERS WERE SEEKING A NEW LIFE AFTER THE RAVAGES OF WORLD WAR II. THEY BROUGHT WITH THEM A NEW AND DIVERSE STYLE OF LIVING WHICH HAS CHANGED IRREVOCABLY THE HABITS OF ALL AUSTRALIANS.

THE CURRENT BOOM IN WINE, WHICH IS ONE OF THE BENEFITS OF THE INFLUENCE OF THESE TWO SEPARATE GENERATIONS, FOLLOWS A LONG BUT UNCERTAIN HISTORY FOR THE INDUSTRY. THE FIRST FEEBLE VINEYARD IN AUSTRALIA WAS PLANTED BY CAPTAIN ARTHUR PHILLIP SOON AFTER THE ARRIVAL OF THE FIRST FLEET IN 1788. IT WAS NOT UNTIL 30 YEARS AFTER THIS INITIAL FAILURE THAT GREGORY BLAXLAND PRODUCED A VINTAGE AND SHIPPED A 30 GALLON CASK OF WINE TO LONDON. IN THE ENSUING FEW YEARS WINE MAKING WAS CARRIED ON BY OTHER SETTLERS. ONE WRITER HAS, HOWEVER, REMARKED THAT IN THOSE VERY EARLY DAYS VITICULTURE AND WINE MAKING "WERE EXCLUSIVELY THE HOBBY OF LANDED, EDUCATED ENGLISH COLONISTS WHO HAD ACQUIRED A TASTE FOR WINE OF THE CONTINENTAL STYLES". "PROBABLY THE WINE THEY MADE WAS POOR STUFF," THE WRITER HAS REMARKED RATHER GRUFFLY. NEVERTHELESS, THE INDUSTRY GRADUALLY SPREAD IN NEW SOUTH WALES, VICTORIA, WESTERN AUSTRALIA AND SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

THE 19TH CENTURY HAD NOT ENDED, HOWEVER, BEFORE THE INDUSTRY STRUCK PROBLEMS. ITS REPUTATION SUFFERED GREAT DAMAGE BECAUSE OF THE BOOM IN CHEAP, FORTIFIED WINES ON THE GOLD DIGGINGS. THEN THE WINE DISEASE, PHYLLOXERA VASTATRIX, SPREAD THROUGHOUT VICTORIA AND PARTS OF NEW SOUTH WALES. THE SECOND PROBLEM WAS SOLVED. THE FIRST CONTINUED, IN DIFFERENT FORMS, FOR SOME TIME. THE LACK OF PROPER EXPORT QUALITY CONTROLS AND BAD BLENDING WITH INFERIOR WINE FROM OTHER PARTS OF THE THEN EMPIRE GREATLY HARMED THE REPUTATION OF AUSTRALIAN WINE. IRONICALLY, IT WAS THE SECOND WORLD WAR WHICH GAVE NEW HEART TO OUR WINEMAKERS. THE SHORTAGE OF OTHER LIQUOR LED TO AN ALMOST THREE-FOLD INCREASE IN THE DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION OF WINE. THE REAL BREAKTHROUGH, HOWEVER, CAME IN THE 1950s AND 1960s. AT LONG LAST AUSTRALIAN WINES WERE ACCEPTED BY A GROWING NUMBER OF AUSTRALIANS FOR THEIR TRUE WORTH.

AUSTRALIANS ARE NOW DRINKING MORE THAN TWO GALLONS OF WINE PER HEAD EVERY YEAR. THE INDUSTRY HAS BEEN OF PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE TO SOUTH AUSTRALIA. MORE THAN TWO-THIRDS OF ALL AUSTRALIAN WINE IS GROWN IN THIS STATE AND THIS HAS BEEN A SIGNIFICANT FACTOR IN THE ECONOMY OF A NUMBER OF REGIONS, SUCH AS THIS AREA.

WHILE THE INDUSTRY IS GENERALLY BUOYANT AT PRESENT, THE GOVERNMENT RECOGNISES THAT SOME PROBLEMS DO EXIST. A TARIFF BOARD REPORT ON BRANDY IN AUGUST LAST YEAR DREW ATTENTION TO THE PROBLEM OF THE OVER-SUPPLY OF BRANDY, TO WHICH MANY GROWERS LOOK AS A MEANS OF USING SURPLUS GRAPES. THE MINISTER FOR PRIMARY INDUSTRY, SENATOR WRIEDT, AND THE MINISTER FOR SECONDARY INDUSTRY, MR. ENDERBY, HAVE ESTABLISHED A BODY TO REPORT TO THEM ON THE MEANS OF ABSORBING GRAPE SURPLUSES ARISING BEFORE ANY LONGER TERM RESTRUCTURING OR ADJUSTMENT PROGRAMS CAN BE IMPLEMENTED. WE EXPECT TO BE ABLE TO CONSIDER THIS REPORT VERY SOON. IN DEALING WITH THOSE AND ANY OTHER PROBLEMS WHICH MIGHT EXIST IN THE INDUSTRY, THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE GUIDED BY THE PRINCIPLE IT WISHES TO APPLY TO ALL PRIMARY INDUSTRIES: THAT THEY BE SELF-SUFFICIENT, PROSPEROUS AND EFFICIENT.

AGAINST THE GENERAL BACKGROUND WHICH I HAVE DESCRIBED, THE BAROSSA CO-OPERATIVE WINERY LIMITED HAS BEEN ONE OF THE SUCCESS STORIES OF THE AUSTRALIAN WINE INDUSTRY. IT CAME INTO BEING IN 1931 WHEN THE GROWERS IN THE VALLEY POOLED THEIR RESOURCES TO MAKE WINE DURING THE DEPRESSION. SINCE 1953, WHEN THE KAISER STUHL LABEL - NAMED AFTER THE FLAT-TOPPED HILL OVERLOOKING THE BAROSSA VALLEY - WAS FIRST USED, THE CO-OPERATIVE HAS PURSUED A VIGOROUS MARKETING POLICY. IN ADDITION TO QUALITY BOTTLES OF WINE, IT HAS SUCCESSFULLY MARKETED FLAGON AND OTHER POPULAR WINES.

ONE OF ITS MOST ENCOURAGING ENDEAVOURS HAS BEEN IN THE FIELD OF EXPORTS. THE CO-OPERATIVE HAS A FULLTIME EXPORT MARKETING DIRECTOR AND IS, I UNDERSTAND, NOW THE LEADING EXPORTER OF AUSTRALIAN WINES TO THE UNITED STATES AND JAPAN. ITS WINES GO TO MORE THAN 20 OVERSEAS MARKETS. JUSTIFIABLY IT WAS AWARDED A NATIONAL EXPORT AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING EXPORT ACHIEVEMENT IN 1973. I HOPE THAT ITS WORK IN THIS FIELD IS TAKEN AS A LEAD BY OTHER AUSTRALIAN WINEMAKERS. CERTAINLY THE AUSTRALIAN DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRY AND THE DEPARTMENT OF OVERSEAS TRADE STAND READY TO ASSIST IN ANY WORTHWHILE ATTEMPTS TO EXPAND OUR OVERSEAS MARKETS.

ON A PERSONAL NOTE, I AM ALSO DELIGHTED AT ANOTHER INNOVATION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE. YOU HAVE INVITED ME TO BE THE FIRST MEMBER OF "CLUB 13" WHICH WILL ENABLE SELECTED WINES TO BE LAID DOWN IN THE KAISER STUHL CELLARS FOR NOMINATED PERSONS. I HAVE HAPPILY NOMINATED MY GRANDSON, ALEXANDER, TO BE THE RECIPIENT OF SOME PORT WHEN HE REACHES HIS 13TH BIRTHDAY. THIS WILL SERVE AS A MATURED MEMORY OF THE OPENING OF THE NEW KAISER STUHL WINERY CHATEAU BY ME TODAY.