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Title:

Speech at the opening of the Materials Handling Exposition

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SPEECH BY THE PREMIER, MR. DUNSTAN, AT THE OPENING OF THE MATERIALS HANDLING EXPOSITION. ELIZABETH. 21/9/71.

I WELCOME THIS OPPORTUNITY TODAY TO OPEN THE MATERIALS HANDLING EXPOSITION ORGANISED BY THE PRODUCTIVITY GROUP AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COUNCILS.

FOR MANY, TOO MANY, PEOPLE "MATERIALS HANDLING" REMAINS ONE OF THOSE PHRASES THE VERY SOUND OF WHICH INVOKES GALLOPING DISINTEREST. THEY SWITCH OFF.

FORTUNATELY THIS IS NOT GENERALLY TRUE AND THERE'S AN INCREASING APPRECIATION OF JUST HOW IMPORTANT A FACTOR IT IS.

THE CHARGES INCURRED IN MOVING GOODS AND MATERIALS TO, THROUGH AND FROM THE PRODUCTION PROCESS CAN BE A VERY HIGH COMPONENT OF FINISHED COSTS. ONE ESTIMATE IS THAT MATERIALS HANDLING ACCOUNTS FOR MORE THAN HALF THE NATIONAL WAGE BILL.

ANY IMPROVEMENTS IN THIS AREA CAN HAVE AN IMMEDIATE EFFECT ON PRODUCTIVITY AND IN PROVIDING THOSE WHO INITIATE THEM WITH A GREATER COMPETITIVE EDGE. THIS IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

PAGE 2.

OUR CENTRAL GEOGRAPHIC POSITION IN AUSTRALIA AND OUR LOWER COST STRUCTURE ARE MAJOR SELLING POINTS WHICH ENABLE US TO SECURE DEVELOPMENT AND PENETRATE OTHER MARKETS.

IT IS AXIOMATIC, HOWEVER, THAT THIS MEANS THAT TRANSPORTATION AND HANDLING CHARGES HAVE A CARDINAL PLACE IN OUR MANUFACTURING COST STRUCTURE. WE REQUIRE TO UTILIZE THE MOST EFFICIENT METHODS AVAILABLE IF WE ARE TO RETAIN OUR HOLD ON OTHER DOMESTIC MARKETS AND IF WE ARE TO DIVERSIFY AWAY FROM OVER-RELIANCE ON THEM TO A GREATER PROPORTION OF EXPORT SALES.

BENEFITS OBTAINED BY SOUTH AUSTRALIAN FIRMS AND ORGANISATIONS IN THE WAY OF BETTER PACKAGING, HANDLING AND MOVEMENT OF GOODS CONFER INDIRECT BENEFITS ON THE STATE AS A WHOLE.

THEREFORE AN EXHIBITION SUCH AS THIS WHICH ALERTS OUR INDUSTRIES TO THE POTENTIAL IN THIS FIELD IS A MOST WELCOME EVENT AND ONE WHICH HAS THE FULL SUPPORT OF MY GOVERNMENT.

THE CHANGES WHICH HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN MATERIALS HANDLING OPERATIONS IN RECENT YEARS HAVE BEEN NOTHING SHORT OF DRAMATIC - SOME OF THE EVIDENCE IS AROUND US TODAY.

THESE ARE PART OF THE BROADER TECHNOLOGICAL EVOLUTION WHICH IS, LITERALLY, RESHAPING OUR LIVES.

THE FULL IMPACT OF THIS IS STILL, DESPITE A WELTER OF WORDS ON THE SUBJECT, NOT GENERALLY APPRECIATED.

THORNTON WILDER ONCE DEFINED TECHNOLOGY AS "THE EXCESS OF SCIENTISTS WHO LEARN TO MAKE THINGS FASTER THAN WE CAN LEARN WHAT TO DO WITH THEM".

NOTHING COULD BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE CHANGES OF THE PAST COUPLE OF DECADES AND THOSE WE CAN NOW FORESEE ARE LIKELY TO BE GREATER THAN EITHER THE FRENCH, RUSSIAN OR AMERICAN REVOLUTIONS.

CHANGE ON THIS SCALE WILL IMPOSE ON US ALL THE NEED TO MAKE SOME MOMENTOUS CHOICES BECAUSE TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE ISN'T ONLY A SIMPLE (OR COMPLEX) MATTER OF NUTS, BOLTS AND COMPUTERS.

IT HAS A HUMAN FACE.

THE CHANGES NOW UPON US HAVE THE POTENTIAL - AND IN SOME AREAS HAVE ALREADY HAD THE EFFECT - OF FREEING MILLIONS FROM DRUDGERY, BRINGING INCREASED PROSPERITY AND LEISURE, IMPROVING HEALTH AND EVEN LIFE SPAN.

EQUALLY TECHNOLOGY CAN MEAN, AND AGAIN HAS MEANT, CLOGGED, UNWORKABLE CITIES, A POLLUTED ENVIRONMENT AND LOSS OF PRIVACY.

THE CHOICES, AS I SAID, ARE MOMENTOUS.

THE PROMISE IS GLITTERING.

THIS MAY SEEM RATHER FAR FROM THE MUNDANE WORLD OF MATERIALS HANDLING BUT IT IS PART OF THE SAME WORLD.

TECHNOLOGICAL IMPROVEMENTS IN THIS AREA HAVE ON A SMALLER SCALE, THE SAME EFFECT OF PROMOTING PRODUCTIVITY AND THEREFORE INDIVIDUAL PROSPERITY.

THE NEED NOW IS NOW IS TO GET TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCE ON TO THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN FACTORY FLOOR, TO TAKE ADVANTAGE HERE OF THIS WORLDWIDE REVOLUTION SO THAT IT CAN PRODUCE MORE JOBS AND SECURE A PROSPEROUS FUTURE.

WE NEED, IN FACT, TO ADOPT A FLEXIBLE, FORWARD-LOOKING ATTITUDE TO INNOVATION, AND TO GRASP ITS POSSIBILITIES RATHER THAN BE SUSPICIOUS OF THEM.

AN EXHIBITION SUCH AS THIS WHICH DEMONSTRATES IN A PARTICULAR FIELD THE KIND OF TANGIBLE BENEFITS THAT SUCH ADAPTABILITY CAN CONFER THEREFORE HAS A GENERAL AS WELL AS A PARTICULAR VALUE TO MANUFACTURERS AND OTHERS.

IT NOW GIVES ME GREAT PLEASURE TO OFFICIALLY DECLARE IT OPEN.