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Title:

Speech at the opening of the Renmark Growers' Distillery Bottling Hall

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SPEECH BY THE PREMIER, DON DUNSTAN, AT THE OPENING OF THE RENMARK
GROWERS' DISTILLERY BOTTLING HALL. 11.2.72

MR. JOHNSON, MR. REYNOLDS, MR. SHEEHAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:
IT'S VERY PLEASANT TO BE BACK IN RENMARK, PARTICULARLY FOR AN
OCCASION AS IMPORTANT TO THE TOWN AS THE OPENING OF THESE NEW
WINERY EXTENSIONS.

THEY HAVE ENABLED THE COMPANY NOT ONLY TO EXPAND ITS ACTIVITIES BUT
ALSO TO MOVE INTO A NEW AREA. IN ONE SENSE THIS ISN'T SURPRISING.
FOR MORE THAN HALF A CENTURY THE RENMARK GROWERS' DISTILLERY HAS
MAINTAINED A TRADITION OF PROGRESSIVE MANAGEMENT AND FLEXIBILITY
IN RESPONDING TO CHANGED CONDITIONS.

RENMARK SET AN EXAMPLE TO THE REST OF THE COUNTRY ON ITS VERY
INCEPTION BY BECOMING THE FIRST CO-OPERATIVE WINERY IN AUSTRALIA.
BEFORE WORLD WAR II IT WAS SETTING ANOTHER BY EXPORTING A CONSIDERABLE
VOLUME OF PRODUCTION TO BRITAIN. WHEN THAT MARKET FELL OFF IN LATE
1940 THE COMPANY RESPONDED BY FINDING NEW OUTLETS IN AUSTRALIA WITH
A CONSIDERABLE QUANTITY BEING BOUGHT BY OTHER WINE MAKING COMPANIES.

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THIS ADAPTABILITY AND WILLINGNESS TO EXPERIMENT IS DEMONSTRATED TOO,
IN YOUR PRESENT INVESTIGATION OF OTHER FRUIT GROWN IN THE AREA TO SEE
WHETHER BEVERAGES CAN BE PRODUCED AND MARKETED FROM PEARS, APRICOTS
AND PEACHES.

ENTERPRISE OF THIS KIND WOULD BE DESIRABLE IN ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.
AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THE WINE EXCISE IMPOSED BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT
IN AUGUST, 1970, IT HAS BECOME ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL.

THE TAX ON WINE IS ONE OF THE MOST IDIOTIC GOVERNMENTAL ACTIONS SINCE
THE ROMAN EMPEROR CALIGULA MADE HIS HORSE A CONSUL. IT HITS DIRECTLY
AND SIGNIFICANTLY AT RURAL AREAS AND PRIMARY INDUSTRY - THE MOST
HARDPRESSED PART OF THE AUSTRALIAN ECONOMY - AND, TO COMPOUND THE
FELONY ITS IMPACT IS FELT HARDEST AT THE LOWER END OF THE PRICE
SCALE.

AS A DIRECT CONSEQUENCE OF THIS ABSURD IMPOST YOUR COMPANY STOOD TO
LOSE 30 PER CENT OF ITS SALES SINCE OTHER WINE MAKING FIRMS WERE NOT
ABLE TO RENEW THEIR CONTRACTS.

YOUR BOARD REACTED QUICKLY AND DETERMINED TO GET OUT AND SELL AND TO INCREASE YOUR SHARE IN TABLE WINE CONSUMPTION. IT HAS COST YOU A CONSIDERABLE SUM OF MONEY AND A LOT OF HARD WORK. IT WAS A WISE DECISION AND ONE THAT MAKES YOU BETTER EQUIPPED TO DEAL WITH MARKET CHANGES IN THE FUTURE. BUT IT WAS ABSURD THAT YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN, IN EFFECT, FORCED INTO IT.

I REPEAT, THE STATE GOVERNMENT BELIEVES THIS TAX IS INIQUITOUS. IT SHOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN IMPOSED. IT SHOULD BE REPEALED.

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS NOW - AT ITS CONSIDERABLE LEISURE - RE-EXAMINING THE SITUATION. I HOPE THAT, EVEN AT THIS STAGE THEY HAVE THE ELEMENTARY SENSE TO ADMIT THEIR MISTAKE AND REVERSE THIS DECISION. BUT EVEN IF THE EXCISE IS REPEALED TOMORROW, CONSIDERABLE DAMAGE WILL HAVE BEEN DONE. IN MY VIEW REMOVAL OF THE TAX SHOULD GO HAND IN HAND WITH CONSIDERATION OF FINANCIAL HELP TO THE INDUSTRY TO OVERCOME THE EFFECTS OF THIS SEVERE BLOW.

I SHALL BE IN CANBERRA ON MONDAY FOR THE PREMIERS' CONFERENCE.

AT THAT MEETING I INTEND TO DISCUSS THE WHOLE QUESTION OF PRESENT COMMONWEALTH ECONOMIC POLICY AND THE DISASTROUS RESULTS THAT ARE FLOWING FROM IT. I SHALL SPECIFICALLY AGAIN RAISE THE MATTER OF WINE EXCISE AND SEEK TO BRING HOME TO THE PRIME MINISTER, AS FORCIBLY AS I CAN, THE IMPERATIVE NEED FOR ITS REPEAL.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THIS NEW BOTTLING HALL HAS ENABLED RENMARK TO MOVE FROM THE MINIMUM INTO THE MEDIUM PRICE FIELD AND THE NEW 'MONTESSA' RANGE IS BEING UNVEILED TODAY.

I WAS DELIGHTED TO HEAR, SIR, THAT YOUR SOUTH AUSTRALIAN SALES FORCE AND INTERSTATE AGENTS HAVE ALREADY MADE ENCOURAGING SALES IN A MARKET WHICH IS NOT BUOYANT. I HOPE YOUR NEW RANGE HAS SIMILAR SUCCESS - IT CERTAINLY HAS GREAT PROMISE SINCE IT COMPRISES SOME OF THE WINES WHICH WON AWARDS IN THE SHOWS LAST YEAR.

THE STATE GOVERNMENT, THROUGH THE OVERSEAS OFFICERS OF THE INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BRANCH OF MY DEPARTMENT, WOULD BE HAPPY TO ASSIST YOU IN INVESTIGATING AND SEEKING POSSIBLE EXPORT OUTLETS FOR THESE AND OTHER PRODUCTS TO SUPPLEMENT DOMESTIC MARKETS.

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SIR, I CONGRATULATE YOUR COMPANY ON THE INITIATIVE DISPLAYED IN
SETTING UP THIS NEW COMPLEX. IT IS OBVIOUSLY EXTREMELY VALUABLE
TO RENMARK AND TO SOUTH AUSTRALIA AND IT NOW GIVES ME MUCH PLEASURE
TO OFFICIALLY DECLARE THE BOTTLING HALL OPEN AND TO UNVEIL THE
'MONTESSA' RANGE.

THANK YOU.