PRESS STATEMENT

September 21st, 1961

Yesterday, a press statement was released by the Managing Director of Portland Wool Brokers Ltd. in which he published the fact that the Australian Council of Woolbuyers has authorised written instructions which have been issued to individual members throughout Australia that such members may not attend or support, directly or indirectly, the Portland market.

I very deeply regret the action that has been taken by the Australian Council of Woolbuyers and will do everything I can to persuade nationally minded buyers to attend at Portland. The clock can't be put back. The harbour has been built at Portland; there is a good wool store and a company has been formed to conduct sales and sales must go forward. Western Victoria and south-eastern South Australia must maintain their determination in the face of this move. It would be a tragedy if the brokers and the buyers were allowed to prevent the sales being a success because it is not just a question of wool sales at Portland, wool sales will lead to other things, they are merely the first step in the establishment of Portland as a full industrial and commercial centre.

I strongly support the view taken by Mr. Buchanan that Portland is the natural outlet for produce for Western Victoria and southeast of South Australia, and for this reason no artificial ban will prevent the establishment of Portland as a woolselling centre.

Together with the Portland Wool Brokers I hope and believe that a majority of buyers will realize the part that Portland is destined to play and will thus not feel too strongly bound by the Council's decision. However, the action that has been taken by the Australian Council of Woolbuyers raises two questions of great importance.

Firstly, as things stand in the wool industry at the present time it appears that the brokers and the buyers have the power if they choose to use it to say where sales should or should not be held. The attempted use of this power has led to a bitter conflict at Goulburn and I sincerely hope that the plain good sense of the majority of buyers will prevent this kind of fighting arising about Portland. However, the question should be examined as to whether the brokers and the buyers should have this power to dictate the place and timing of wool sales. In my view there should be some overall body on which growers could also be represented and through which agreement could be reached without the public dissension and argument. If such a committee had existed prior to the establishment of Portland Wool Brokers the determination of the Victorian Wheat and Woolgrowers' Association, the Australian Primary Producers' Union and the Graziers' Association might well have prevented opposition by the National Council of Woolselling Brokers and the Australian Council of Woolbuyers.
Secondly, in addition to this, I am placing this new evidence before the Attorney-General, Sir Garfield Barwick, asking him to examine as a matter of urgency whether or not an organization like the Australian Council of Woolbuyers should be allowed to have the power that it has over its members to tell them which sales they should or should not attend. On my information this body has this power at the present time. I don't think an Organization should be allowed to exercise power in this way, and this is a matter that I hope might be limited once Restrictive Practices legislation is introduced in conjunction with the States.

Now more than ever it will be up to the growers to make sure these sales are going to be a success. If growers are determined they will not be dictated to and if a sufficient number can send a sufficient quantity of good wool to Portland I am confident the sales will be successful.

Growers should remember that if the worst happened and if they sent their wool to Portland and if the buyers did not attend they would still be able to ship their wool to London and have it sold, in many cases, before it would get into the regular sales held by old established Brokers in Australia. This makes it possible for the growers' position to be safeguarded, and this is important when many growers are operating near the margin of profit at the present time.
Library Digitised Collections

Author/s:
Fraser, Malcolm

Title:
Portland wool sales

Date:
21 September 1961

Persistent Link:
http://hdl.handle.net/11343/40023

File Description:
Portland wool sales

Terms and Conditions:
Copyright courtesy of Malcolm Fraser. Contact the University of Melbourne Archives for permission requests.