PRESS STATEMENT:

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WOOL INDUSTRY RE-ORGANIZATION

December 9th, 1962

Last week, the Minister for Primary Industry, Mr. Adermann, introduced the Wool Industry Bill into the House of Representatives. This is the most important piece of legislation ever introduced into any Australian Parliament affecting the wool industry.

The Wool Industry Bill is the culmination of efforts begun about 3 years ago to try and bring unity into the wool industry. Because Wool Industry Organizations were unable to agree on the vital subject of wool marketing, they jointly asked the Commonwealth to establish the Wool Marketing Committee of Enquiry. This Committee took much evidence. One of its most important recommendations was that an overall authority should be established to manage the affairs of the industry.

Up to the present time, the wool industry has been in a relatively chaotic state. The growers, brokers and buyers have not been co-ordinated and, at times, have worked without harmony. The growers, whose product was involved, had little control over their industry after the wool was taken from the sheep's back. He had some remote control through the Wool Bureau and the Wool Research Committee but these bodies were unco-ordinated and were working independently of each other.

The Committee of Enquiry believed that one authority should have control of the industry and that the growers should control that authority. It put forward recommendations which would bring the Wool Bureau (responsible for promotion), and the Wool Research Committee under one authority. The Committee of Enquiry also suggested that there should be a marketing Committee to watch constantly the auction system and to examine alternative systems and to recommend their introduction if the Committee thought proper.

The Woolgrower Organizations examined these proposals earlier this year and in the beginning of the Spring session of Parliament, much earlier than some people had forecast, an agreement was completed between the Australian Wool and Meat Producers' Federation and the Australian Woolgrowers' and Graziers' Council. They came to the Government with joint proposals for an organization that would control the industry. The Wool Industry Bill gives effect to these proposals.

There will be a Wool Industry Conference, which is a non-statutory body, established by the Australian Wool & Meat Producers' Federation and the Australian Woolgrowers' & Graziers' Council. It consists of 50 members, 25 from each Organization. Its main functions will be to nominate woolgrower representatives to the Wool Board; to consult with the Minister concerning the appointment of non-grower members to the Board; to recommend the maximum rate of levy to be collected from woolgrowers to finance the activities of the Wool Board; to recommend the operative rate of levy to be struck; to consult with the Minister concerning the appointment of the first Chairman of the Board and to consult with the Wool Board in respect to the activities of the Board.

This is a non-statutory body established by these two Organizations. It will become the national forum for woolgrowers in Australia.

While the establishment of this Conference represents a marked step forward, it has one grave weakness. The A.P.P.U. is not included in the membership of the Conference despite the most vigorous discussions between the Government, private members of Parliament and the industry leaders. This is a matter of vital concern and I will deal with it later. I will continue to describe the statutory bodies established by this new Bill.
The Australian Wool Board will be the overall governing authority responsible to the Wool Conference for the present activities of the Wool Bureau, the Wool Research Committee and the Wool Testing Authority. In addition, the legislation makes it mandatory for this Wool Board to establish a Wool Marketing Committee to enquire into the auction system and to recommend any changes that it thinks desirable and to report to the Wool Board. The research activities of the Wool Board will be carried out by two Research Committees, one to specialise in production research and the other in textile research.

The legislation does not lay down how the Wool Board should carry out its promotion activities. This will be left to the discretion of the Wool Board as a whole. The Wool Board will have control over any Committees that it may establish.

On the Board there will be six woolgrowers appointed from the Wool Conference, a Chairman, a Government representative and three others appointed by the Minister from a panel put forward by the Wool Conference. The Wool Conference, as the governing body, will have over-riding control over the Wool Board. This makes grower control complete and absolute.

All woolgrowers will watch the activities of this Marketing Committee most keenly. It is significant that the view of many growers has changed very much in recent years. For example, within the last two months, the Graziers' Association of New South Wales passed resolutions asking this Marketing Committee, when established, to examine appraisal schemes with a view to their introduction. Three or four years ago, many growers from that Organization would have regarded such a request as radical in the extreme. Indeed, as a result of arguments that I will develop in the debate in the Parliament on this matter, I believe we may find this Marketing Committee recommending the abandonment of the auction system entirely.

If the Marketing Committee comes to the stage when it is ready to recommend radical changes in the marketing of the Australian wool clip the major organisations have said that they want these recommendations put to a ballot of all woolgrowers. So long as such recommendations have the endorsement of the Wool Board and of the Conference, there will be no doubt that such a referendum would be carried.

For the first time in history, the Wool industry will be placed in the hands of woolgrowers represented on the Conference. If all growers can work for their desired objectives firstly, through their grower organisations and by their agency, through the Conference, we will find the Wool Industry emerging from the disorganization of recent years as a powerful, unified voice on the Australian scene. Indeed, this voice could become so powerful that it may embarrass Governments from time to time but if the Wool Industry does achieve this position I, for one, as a politician, would welcome it.

The Wool Industry is of permanent importance to all Australians, not just to woolgrowers, and it deserves a powerful and forceful voice on the national stage. Hitherto, it has not had this voice because the Industry Organisations have been disunited. Every woolgrower should keep these great national objectives in his sights when he is seeking improvements for his industry. We should all work through this Organization so that it can be strengthened and gain the prestige which it deserves.

Next week I will talk about the Conference and the negotiations that have been undertaken about its members with special reference to membership of the A.F.P.U.
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