I warmly welcome the announcement by the Premier of Victoria that he is going to legislate to settle the Portland Wool Sales dispute. The field of negotiation is clearly exhausted. Everyone has tried to solve this question by negotiation, particularly the Premier, who had a final meeting with the Woolbuyers about 4 weeks ago. We all thought, as a result of this meeting, the Buyers might sensibly revise their policy at a recent Annual Meeting that they have just held. Instead, the Buyers re-affirmed their opposition and boycott of Portland, ignored the wishes of the three major Woolgrowing organisations, the determination of people in Western Victoria to develop Portland, and finally, the authority and power of the State Government.

It was quite clear that the Buyers could not be allowed to win. They could not be allowed to thwart the development of an important area of Australia purely in defence of sectional interests, especially so since the whole case had been judged by an impartial economic inquiry which could not have supported Portland more strongly than it did.

I am sure this legislation will have the strongest support from the three major Woolgrowing organisations. Recently, they have been co-operating very well together and planning joint moves in efforts to settle the dispute. In part, at least, the decision to legislate arises from this co-operation of the Woolgrowing organisations. It is an indication of the influence they can have when they are pulling together and striving for the same objectives.

Having exhausted negotiation, the Premier has grasped the one remaining alternative to him firmly and with determination. The legislative powers of the State are to be used and these powers are great and extensive.

It is worth recording that, in New South Wales, when the Buyers tried to close down an existing centre, a similar situation arose. Mr. Justice Cooke, who held an exhaustive inquiry, recommended legislation to break the ban. The Graziers' Association
of New South Wales went so far as to prepare a draft Bill. Even the Brokers of New South Wales recognised that the ban could only be broken by legislation.

In broad terms, the Bill that it had been proposed to introduce in New South Wales was called the "Wool Selling Centres Protection Act." The selling centres were all named and any act undertaken by any person or group in restraint of trade at any centre was going to be illegal with very heavy penalties on the Association if it was continued.

While I do not know anything about the details of the proposed Victorian Act, it has been announced that it will follow somewhat similar lines. It is worth noting that the New South Wales legislation did not attempt to dictate to Buyers. It did not say to them as individuals - "You must go to Goulburn." It did not tell them as individuals that they had to bid. It merely made it impossible for organised boycott to be maintained and once the boycott was broken, the normal market forces were allowed to operate. Buyers, following their own economic interest, attended Goulburn sales. It will be interesting to see how the situation develops in Victoria.

The Premier's decision to legislate may have other repercussions that will further assist Portland's development. It is possible that some Woolbroking firms have been waiting to see how the Buyers' ban would be handled before deciding whether or not they should go to Portland. Now that they know that the State Government is prepared to use its full legislative power to make the sales a success, there may be decisions by other Broking Companies about Portland.

While I hope many people will remain loyal to Portland Woolbrokers as the pioneer Broking firm in this particular matter, there is no doubt that the best interests of Portland as a Wool Selling centre will be served if there is more than one Broking firm operating.
The Woolgrowers' deputation which was elected following the failure of the first sale has, I believe, played a useful part throughout this whole matter. It has been active right up to the present stage in trying to seek means of ending the dispute successfully.

I personally wish to thank all members of the deputation for their co-operation, assistance and support.

The deputation has discussed the kind of legislation enacted in New South Wales and certainly it gives the fullest support to the Premier's latest move. We now all hope that once the legislation is passed, no further obstacles will be placed in the way of Portland's development as a Wool Selling centre. The other members of the deputation were Mr. R. McClure of Harrow, Mr. D. Cameron of Pigeon Ponds, Councillor C. Rochefort of Dunkeld and Mr. R. Malseed of Mount Gambier.

CANBERRA, A.C.T.

2nd April, 1963.