Old fears die hard. We still find some people amongst us who believe or assert that a period of unemployment and hardship lies before the Australian people. These fears are groundless. I can see no reason whatsoever to doubt the future that this country holds for its citizens. In saying this I make one provision — we must all continue to work together to remain aware of the needs and wishes of all people in our community. If we continue to do this, as we have done over the last three or four years (and for evidence of this I would ask you to look about you and take notice of the peace and prosperity found in every home today) if we continue to face our problems instead as a strong nation then the future holds no fear for us.

The good job that has been done over the last three or four years is not generally realised. When, during the depression of the thirties, Australia's export income fell by 30%, the Labour Government, then in office, could not prevent unemployment from reaching 30% of Trade Unionists. There are many people today who still remember the bitterness and suffering of those years. In the recent financial crisis that the present Federal Government had to master, export income again fell by approximately 30% but unemployment was checked at less than 2%. Since the financial crisis employment figures have steadily improved till on 2nd January, 1954, there were only just over 2000 people out of a job in Victoria, while there were nearly 18,000 vacancies. The people out of a job would be mostly seasonal workers and people who did not want to find work. In Wannon, which corresponds fairly nearly with the area covered by the Employment Office in Hamilton, there has not been even one person receiving unemployment benefits since last November. This was true when I was in the Office last early in February and I have no reason to believe the position has altered since. This is a fine tribute to the work of the Hamilton Branch of the Commonwealth Employment Office. The Office has been quick and efficient in finding new jobs as people have come to them for work. At the same time it is a tribute to the Federal Government which alone can create conditions in which jobs are readily available for all men and women. If the country was still beset by strikes and industrial unrest as it was before 1949 it would be impossible for the men in the Commonwealth Employment Service to carry out their work as they have done in Wannon.

Unemployment is now at a record low level, considering the number of vacancies in January was seven times the number of those out of a job for all practical purposes, we can say unemployment does not exist. What are the prospects for the future? Federal Minister for Labour believes that the great variety of development projects now proceeding throughout the Commonwealth will lead to an even greater demand for labour. Indeed when we take a look at out country it is hard to imagine how a shortage of jobs could possibly occur. Here in Wannon there is much development work that can be done in future years, in bringing new land into production and in improving old pastures, or in opening up new factories. When we look outside our own areas the possibilities for development and research are unlimited.

Even if the prevention of the individual unhappiness and hardship that comes from unemployment, is not sufficient cause, the necessity to develop our country so that it may remain strong and free is a further powerful reason why we cannot afford to waste the efforts of a single person in building this nation. Now there are jobs for all, let's continue to work together and keep it that way.