People have been living in this western part of Victoria for over one hundred years, and although much has been done in the way of development, much more remains to be done in future years. It is true that many of our farms are now producing two, three or even five times more than they were a few years ago, but even so, I can see no end to the task ahead. We will always find that there will be new improvements and techniques which we will be able to try out on our farms, and if one day we seem to have reached the limit of our knowledge, the next will bring something new with it. For example, many of our pastures are now with sub-clover and rye, but now many farms are sowing phalaris.

In addition to advances in farming methods, the last few years have seen the beginnings of industry in Wannon. This serves not only to supply many of the needs of our primary producers but also to form a large local market for many of our primary products.

Recently, definite advance has also been made in opening up crown lands. It is expected that areas in Balalle, Hornsby and Bowen which have already been surveyed, will make farms for about five hundred men. Experiments are now being carried out at Kentbruck by a soil conservation officer stationed at Coleraine, to find out the best methods of improvement for this land. This development will bring new land into production. Apart from this, however, it is estimated that the sowing down of unimproved country up to the present standard of pasture improvement will add over one hundred thousand bales to the wool clip produced in western Victoria. This again does not take into account the greater number of cattle that will also be carried.

With soldier settlement and eventually closer settlement, together with general farming progress, the output from this part of Victoria will rise considerably in the next ten to twenty years. There will also be increased inward traffic supplying the needs of farmers and of the growing secondary industries. To carry this trade we will need better and more efficient transport.

At the present time this trade, both inward and outward, centres largely on Melbourne and Geelong. At peak times of the year the ports of Melbourne and Geelong find it hard enough to cope with the volume of traffic, and as production increases, the congestion there will get worse.
Victoria as a whole needs a new port, and in the future this need will become more urgent. This port must be placed to supply the needs of areas furthest from Melbourne and Geelong so that people may be given the advantages of quicker and more direct transport.

In 1921 the Portland Harbour Trust took over control of the harbour and began the construction of a fully equipped deep sea port. It is expected that the first two new berths will be completed in two years, although the final undertaking will take about twenty years. The Portland Harbour Scheme had been contemplated for a long time, but now the first six hundred feet of the main breakwater have been built, as any visitor to Portland can see.

This development is going to mean a great deal to the people of Wannon. Hamilton and Casterton are roughly sixty miles from Portland, less than one third the distance to Melbourne, and rail charges would be correspondingly lower. Barrow, Edenhope and Horsham are also nearer Portland than Melbourne or Geelong. With a superphosphate works at Portland many farmers would be able to collect their own supplies, making the round trip in a day, whereas at present they have to depend upon an irregular railroad service from Melbourne or Geelong. Fencing supplies, iron and agricultural equipment would also come direct to Portland from their port of embarkation thus reaching their users more cheaply and more quickly. At the same time, raw materials for local industry would reach Wannon far more economically.

Portland already ships abroad considerable quantities of meat from Berthwicks', butter, cheese and wool, while in the last few months the first shipment of barley for twenty years was recently sent abroad.

Trade both inward and outward from Portland will greatly increase. For the people of Wannon it is the natural trading centre, being closer than other ports where there are considerable delays due to centralisation. Wool leaving Hamilton can often be sold more quickly in London than in Melbourne. Goods can reach the farms and factories of Wannon more cheaply and at the same time export through Portland is quicker and cheaper, and this is an important point when there is keen competition in selling our products abroad. Apart from the question of economy and efficiency, the possession of another fully equipped deep sea port will be invaluable as a defence measure.

The diversion of trade will not come quickly. The two things that
would hasten the movement most would be the establishment of a superphosphate works and of a wool selling centre at Portland. These would both give positive advantages to the primary producer, advantages that he would return by diversion of his trade to Portland. If we all recognise the value and the need of the Portland harbour, the scheme could well be completed ahead of schedule. The harbour will be there for the benefit and progress of the people of Wannon. It is for the people of Wannon to show that they want the scheme.
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