The Wool Industry has faced some pretty substantial difficulties in recent times, the main one from our point of view in western Victoria being the slump in world price for our product last year.

The position has, of course, improved since then, although we are unlikely to see a return to the great boom days of the early 1950's.

With this in mind, it is not without its irony to note that wool's main competitors, synthetic fibre manufacturers, are undergoing a period of strain.

The makers of synthetics have for a long time organised themselves better than we in the Wool Industry have done. They have provided their customers with a more convenient service, made it easier to order, buy and receive their products. This kind of streamlined marketing is something I have been arguing for ever since I was a backbencher and at last, it seems, something is being done about it.

But to return to synthetics, I am sure the Australian Wool Board was not unhappy to be able to report in a recent bulletin that the synthetic fibre industry had faced unprecedented trouble and chaos. It certainly seems true that the manufacturers of synthetics are facing enormous difficulties as a result of over-protection in one form or another.
It appears that the cause of it all was the American manufacturers’ tardiness in developing I.C.I.’s crimplene process and the speed with which the European manufacturers sought to fill the gap in the American market.

By the time the Americans had geared to increase production and the Europeans and Asian manufacturers had run into U.S. tariff and quota difficulties, the situation had become, to say the least, awkward.

The Wool Board details the financial problems of some of the big manufacturers of synthetics, but finishes its review on a sober and realistic note.

"The cold fact is," says the Wool Board, "that in the long term, wool alone cannot sustain high market levels. It is part of the broad textile scene and must be affected by serious instability in other sectors. The more the synthetic producers fight among themselves, the more severe will be their price cutting and the greater the temptation for processors to substitute cheaper fibres.

"Incongruously, therefore," the Board says, "woolgrowers should be relieved that man-made fibre prices seem to have reached rock bottom. A gradual increase is likely, if only for the reason that the rising cost of oil, basis for most synthetics, labour and borrowed capital must eventually be recouped."

The Wool Board's point is well made. However good wool is, we must always remember it is a fibre among fibres. In our production, promotion and marketing, this must always be in our minds.
Allegations of fraud, blackmail, conspiracy and forgery are unpleasant under any circumstances. When they are associated with Australian public life, with our Parliament and Government, then they are particularly distressing.

When I heard these very charges being made in the House of Representatives recently I was gravely concerned. My concern, and that of many members on both sides of the House, transcended Party politics, because they came from a highly respected member of Federal Parliament who is not given to intemperate outbursts and who had obviously given the whole affair his deepest consideration.

I am, of course, referring to the Shortland affair. Charlie Griffiths is about to retire after twenty-three years as member for Shortland in the Newcastle area.

You are all familiar with the bitter wrangling that has been going on for a year or more in the rush to obtain party endorsement to succeed Mr. Griffiths, who represents what has been regarded as a safe seat.

An embittered Mr. Griffiths felt obliged to make this whole affair the subject of what was perhaps his final speech in Federal Parliament.

He called on either the Federal or N.S.W. Governments to inquire into his allegations before all the evidence was removed or destroyed.

I only wish to say that it is a great pity that a man, who had served long and with honour in the House of Representatives, should have to deliver such a speech as what may prove to be his swansong in public life.

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