With every passing day the Wool Industry grows stronger.

I wish I could have said the same thing this time last year but, as you all know, the situation then was an unpleasant one. It was a time of desperately low wool prices when only the activities of the Australian Wool Commission saved the vital Australian industry from probable collapse.

It was a time when the Commonwealth Government faced the prospect of an outlay of more than $200 million had wool prices not improved during the last financial year.

It was a time of great concern for us all. Today prices are stronger and I believe the Commonwealth can claim a substantial part of the credit for the improvement.

All of us are now looking ahead to the future. We are looking expectantly to the Australian Wool Marketing Corporation, the proposed amalgamation of the Australian Wool Board and Wool Commission, and to the recommendations it will put before the Federal Government for wool marketing reform including acquisition.

In our expectancy for the future we should not overlook the success of the past, especially the immediate past. I was reminded of this only two or three weeks ago when the Minister for Primary Industry, Mr Sinclair, commended the efforts of the Australian Wool Commission.

He said that the reserve pricing activities of the Australian Wool Commission had resulted in a gain of $70 million to the wool industry, a gain which was a significant factor in the revival of the industry's economic position.
Complementing the gain has been the disposal, at a significant profit, of the large proportion of the stocks built up by the Commission in the early months of the past wool selling season.

Mr Sinclair paid high tribute to the Commission's Chairman, Mr Vines, the Commission's members, the General Manager of the Commission, Mr Vawser, and his staff, particularly in the face of criticisms which they sometimes had levelled at them.

I join Mr Sinclair in that tribute. I think the final seal of approval on the Commission's activities was the evidence in its Annual Report to Parliament showing that the Commission had registered a profit of $10.39 million.

I believe the future of the wool industry will be far more stable and ordered, if not spectacular in profit making of the kind we knew 20 years ago. But I also believe that in the years ahead, the work of the Australian Wool Commission in the crisis from which we have only recently emerged will be more and more appreciated and the Government's firm action at that time fully justified.

Before concluding, I want to refer to two statements by Mr Whitlam in the last week or two, statements which I feel he should regret very much.

On television in Melbourne, Mr Whitlam said a Labor Government would change the law to allow senior public servants the right to speak openly.

First, I believe practically all responsible public servants would oppose such a development, and for very good reasons. Under our system, Ministers rely heavily on advice from senior departmental officers, advice given frankly and within the traditional framework of trust and privacy of communication which exists between public servants and political heads. The decision and the accountability for that decision are the Minister's, not the public servant's.
If Mr Whitlam had his way the entire system would collapse. The confidence between Minister and public servant would be shattered.

To avoid the prospect of public conflict with their Minister on occasions when they disagreed with him, departmental officers would be tempted to offer advice which they knew he would want to hear. At the same time, new Ministers might be inclined to change senior staff because their publicly known views under previous Ministers were at variance with theirs. The upheaval in the public service would be enormous, the pressure on individual departmental officers intolerable and the whole public service system threatened.

Senior Public Servants in particular need to be in a position in which their advice will be respected not only by different Ministers but by Ministers from different governments. If they have been involved in public controversy, that situation is difficult to maintain.

Finally, I refer to Mr Whitlam's remark concerning the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Anthony, made on the same TV programme.

Tackled over his commitment to revalue upwards the Australian dollar thereby reducing every Australian farmer's income through lost export earnings, Mr Whitlam turned on Mr Anthony, describing him as the poorest educated man holding senior political office Federally.

Mr Whitlam's remark is at best in bad taste. Mr Anthony, a farmer, is a diplomate from the Queensland Agricultural College, Gatton. But more than that, Mr Anthony's contributions to the welfare and good government of Australia in several portfolios and now as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade and Industry are very substantial indeed.

He is a first class Minister, a first class leader of the Country Party.
Mr Whitlam's remarks are certainly not in the best Labor traditions. I wonder what he would have thought of Ben Chifley, the engine driver who became a great Prime Minister.
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