RADIO TALK

This week I would like to talk with you about long-term loans to rural producers. Government action to control pollution. . . the 35-hour working week, and the latest on the Australian Wool Commission.

Men on the land will be pleased to hear that the Government proposes creating a Finance Insurance Corporation to insure long-term loans for primary producers.

Talks will be held soon between the Government and financial institutions on the establishment of the Corporation.

What is envisaged is an organisation similar in concept to the Housing Finance Corporation.

It was expected that the guaranteed long-term loans would benefit many farmers. The loans would enable them to plan more for the future and would give the primary producer added security.

Investigations into the long-term loan proposal had been carried out by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics.

I believe that the scheme will work and it is one that is very much in the national interest.

An additional problem for primary producers, that is under close Government examination, is that of the existing farm debt.

A current report from the Bureau of Agricultural Economics on rural debt re-construction and farm adjustment pointed up clearly the importance of long-term credit to alleviate the problems of farmers and graziers hit by drought coupled with marketing difficulties.

Long-term debt re-construction will assist those whose businesses are basically sound and who have good prospects of servicing the capital value of their debt, after debt re-construction has taken place.

The Bureau's report discusses possible measures which can be taken to tackle the indebtedness and structural problems of the rural sector. These measures are being examined very carefully.

Data obtained by the Bureau make it clear that a significant proportion of primary producers in areas hit by drought are likely to become insolvent unless they are given access to long-term credit for re-construction of their debts.
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The Government is very conscious of the need for an integrated series of policy measures to provide a more rapid adjustment in the structure of the sheep industry to its economic outlook.

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The Government's concern over the risks of environmental pollution in Australia resulted this week in the decision to set up a Commonwealth Office of the Environment.

Pollution is not the inevitable by-product of advanced technology and population increase. But it does represent a failure to take fully into account the environmental consequences of our actions, and of the disposal of waste products by individuals and factories.

The results of pollution in Australia are not yet approaching the damaging results which are threatening the more heavily industrialised and more heavily populated countries. But the time to start correcting present pollution is now.

The State Governments are showing an awareness of this and the C.S.I.R.O. has been carrying out a wide range of investigations into environmental quality.

The C.S.I.R.O. has been engaged on about 48 projects concerned with such matters as biological control of insect pests...treatment of factory waste and control of the ash content of coal.

In many cases pollution control can best be carried out by a National body. For instance, pollution of a stream in one State can lead to pollution of a river in another State.

Because of this the Government has decided to set up a Commonwealth Office of the Environment under the control of the Prime Minister's Department. This office will advise the Commonwealth and recommend action to prevent, or reduce, pollution by any Commonwealth Department or Authority.

The Federal Government will be approaching the States seeking the formation of a National Advisory Council. This Council will advise the Commonwealth and the States on action to be taken where co-ordination can properly be achieved.

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The Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Whitlam, has said that he supports
shorter working hours. It is a policy of the Labor movement to support a shorter working week. Mr. Whitlam is now under attack by his "shadow" Minister for Primary Industry, Dr. Patterson, and so he should be.

I have been speaking of the rural industries and its problems. With their costs high, and their returns low, they would be dealt a crippling blow if the Labor movement's policy was carried through.

Under the Whitlam-Hawke partnership there is a real danger that the 35-hour working week would happen...if they had the opportunity.

The result of a 35-hour working week would be greatly increased costs. This would hit all those on fixed incomes. It would hit all those on superannuation... those living on income from investments and it would hit all pensioners.

The 35-hour working week would raise the price of everything the housewife buys and lift the price of transport and other public facilities she uses.

It would place Australia at great disadvantage in trying to sell our products on the competitive export market. It would raise the cost of building schools, hospitals, roads, houses and other services the community needs. And the worker would be no better off.

The most the worker could gain would be higher money wages...which because of higher prices for everything he bought, would buy no more. At this time it is hard to think of any action which would do more damage to Australia and Australians.

Yet, Mr. Hawke of the A.C.T.U. has announced that 1971 will be the year of the 35-hour working week...this is his stated aim. Mr. Whitlam is bound by the platform, constitution and rules which were adopted in August last year, and which state: "That Conference considers that an effective political campaign be undertaken, in conjunction with the A.C.T.U., to achieve our objective of a 35-hour working week."

Today, Mr. Whitlam is conveniently evading all questions on the matter.

I believe the time for less work has not yet nearly arrived. Both the individual and the community have too many pressing needs, and these needs cannot be met unless they are worked for.
There has been quite a bit of action this week over the setting up of the Australian Wool Commission. The Acting-Chairman and members of the Commission have been named and the Commission met for the first time on Friday, in Melbourne.

I expect that the Commission will be operating the flexible reserve price scheme for wool within a few weeks.

The Government has worked long and hard to establish the Commission and I hope that it will continue to attract the support through unity of all woolgrowers.
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