

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE RT. HON.
SIR ROBERT MENZIES, K.T., C.H., Q.C., M.P.,

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

TUESDAY, 28TH SEPTEMBER, 1965

WOOL RESERVE PRICE PLAN 1965

My attention has been directed to the terms of a nation-wide broadcast to woolgrowers by Mr. S.S. Neville, Chairman of the Australian Wool Board's Marketing Committee.

In this broadcast, the following statement occurs -

"Finally, the Prime Minister has clearly revealed the views concerning the reserve price arrangement of his Government, and I quote -- 'Besides protecting the individual grower, the Plan will help stabilise the industry and the national economy. These objects will be achieved without any of the elements of controlled marketing by Government control associated with most primary industry marketing arrangements, to which the characteristically independent woolgrower objects.'"

The use of this quotation is grossly misleading. How misleading (to use no stronger word) will at once appear when I tell the House that the words, attributed to me as if they related to the Plan now under consideration by woolgrowers, were part of a statement made on behalf of the Government no less than fourteen years ago. At that time there was another Reserve Price Plan, of an international character, negotiated among and supported by the Australian, New Zealand, South African, and British Governments. The British Government had already agreed to contribute substantial capital to the fund necessary to establish it.

That scheme was designed to represent a continuance of the Joint Organization reserve price arrangement after the winding up of the J.O.

In anticipation of that plan going into operation, the Australian Government, with the concurrence of woolgrower organizations, imposed a levy of 7½% on the gross proceeds of wool sold in 1950-51. This yielded about £45M., which was very near to the £48M. which Australian woolgrowers were expected to contribute for the capital of the Scheme.

My Government supported the Scheme, which had been negotiated internationally. My statement was made on behalf of the Government.

Today, fourteen years later, another scheme has been propounded for wool-marketing in Australia. What my Government has done is to agree with the representatives of the industry that -

- (a) The woolgrowers will make their own decision at a referendum.
- (b) If the scheme is approved, the Government will play its part according to the terms of the prepared plan.
- (c) That the Government will not take sides in a matter which it thinks proper for decision by the woolgrowers themselves.

Under these circumstances, to claim the Prime Minister as a public partisan is to accuse him of violating the principle which on behalf of his own Government he has tried to make clear.

This I greatly resent. The facts I have recited will justify that resentment to the full.
