In recent weeks, there has been a good deal of optimism about the future of the wool industry, prompted mainly by the encouraging movements of wool prices at auctions throughout Australia.

As a wool grower and a Member of the Government, I have naturally been delighted to see the demand for wool improve to the extent that prices have surpassed the 36 cents a pound minimum guaranteed by the Commonwealth under the deficiency payments scheme.

This scheme and the Commonwealth's commitment to the Australian Wool Commission could have cost the Government well over $200 million this year if prices had not strengthened. But that was the extent to which the Commonwealth was prepared to go to maintain a great Australian industry.

However, this is not the end of the matter just because prices rise from the disastrous to the mediocre. Only a few days ago, the Commonwealth Government gave an undertaking which emphasises the positive nature of our concern for the future of wool. The Primary Industry Minister announced that the Government would study thoroughly the proposal from the wool industry for acquisition and marketing of the entire Australian wool clip.

We cannot say at this early stage what the outcome of the Government's deliberations will be. But one thing is sure. The Government will consider the proposal fully aware of the objectives of those putting it forward. Behind the proposal lies more than a desire to implement an acquisition and marketing plan. There is a realisation that for wool to compete successfully with synthetics, there must be established a modern selling system. The cumbersome process that now exists must be streamlined to make it easier and more convenient for the textile manufacturer to obtain the supplies of wool that he wants.
One of the great advantages of the producer of synthetic fibres is his ability to tailor his supply to the manufacturer's demand and to deliver his product free of the kind of procedures the wool producer faces. As wool growers and people whose livelihoods are to a considerable extent bound up in the wool industry, we must consider these factors. We must look beyond the farm gate, as they say. In considering the wool industry's acquisition and marketing proposal, the Commonwealth Government is playing its part in this vital matter.

Last week, I talked about the rule of law in our community and its general acceptance by the vast majority of citizens as a cornerstone of our democratic society.

I discussed the issue because the A.L.P. Leader, Mr. Whitlam, had challenged this fundamental principle with his declaration that 'draft dodging is not a crime'.

Mr. Whitlam then went on to justify his statement by saying that an A.L.P. Government would abolish national service. He took the incredible view that it is not a crime to break a law that the Opposition intended to change if it had the opportunity.

As you are no doubt aware, this whole issue stemmed from the A.L.P.'s endorsement of Mr. Barrie Johnston for the Victorian electorate of Hotham in the next Federal election. Mr. Johnston is being sought by Commonwealth Police for failing to comply with the National Service Act. He recently addressed a Labor Party meeting behind closed doors.

From the widespread objections that the whole issue generated, especially in view of Mr. Whitlam's professional standing as a barrister, it would be assumed that the A.L.P. would realise its mistake and attempt to extricate itself from its predicament.

Precisely the opposite occurred, and gave the lie to the view that the Party's Victorian Branch had been restructured to make it more moderate. It demonstrated that the influence of the left wing within the Labor movement in Victoria is as virulent as ever it was. On the eve of the A.L.P.'s Federal Executive Meeting in Adelaide, the former secretary of the Victorian
3.

A.L.P., Mr. Hartley, said he would put a proposal seeking full support for Mr. Johnston, their candidate for Hotham. Mr. Hartley and Mr. Hawke, the president of the Australian Council of Trade Unions, are Victoria's two delegates to the 18-member Federal Executive.

The next day, it was reported that Mr. Hartley and Mr. Hawke had abandoned the Victorian branch's plan to seek Federal Executive endorsement for Mr. Johnston.

In summary, the whole issue demonstrates two things – first, that the Victorian Branch of the Party gives full support to Mr. Whitlam's statement that draft dodging is not a crime, and second, that the Victorian Executive of the A.L.P. is as left-wing oriented as it ever was, despite the alleged reorganisation.

This is not a once-only casual error. It was a deliberate act of the Victorian Branch of the A.L.P. to select Mr. Johnston. It was their deliberate act to give him continued support. It was Mr. Whitlam's deliberate statement which indicated he regarded draft dodging as not a crime. It served only to remind us of the press statement he issued on September 23, 1970, which could have led to mutiny among Australian forces if it had been followed by our troops.

How Mr. Whitlam believes the community can operate on that kind of basis I just cannot understand. This sort of advice and this sort of action by people or organisations who ought to be regarded as responsible does much to undermine the whole basis of our society.

It is worth recalling that originally those who were opposing national service were opposing it because it was service for overseas, including Vietnam. It has become quite plain that that was merely a front. The opposition within the Labor Party is opposition to National Service of any kind. Australians generally understand that in this country there are obligations as well as rights. Mr. Whitlam and his colleagues, by their actions, are doing much to undermine this.