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STEVEDORING INDUSTRY : PROPOSED CONFERENCE

Statement by the Prime Minister, Sir Robert
Menzies

This morning I informed Mr. Monk, the President of the Australian Council of Trade Unions, that the Government agreed with his proposal for a Conference whose objective would be the long term improvement of conditions in the stevedoring industry. The participants in the Conference should be the A.C.T.U., the Waterside Workers' Federation, the Employers of Waterfront Labour, the Australian Stevedoring Industry Authority and the Department of Labour and National Service.

The Conference will decide its own agenda and the procedures to be followed. However, the general charter for the Conference will be to deal with those matters relating to the W.W.F. which were raised by the Employers and the W.W.F. during the conferences between them which broke down in May and also the matters raised by the Federation on 30th July. Matters dealt with by the recent legislation, political problems such as nationalisation of the industry, and the modernisation of the ports will be excluded from the Conference consideration.

I also advised Mr. Monk that Mr. Woodward should chair the Conference. Mr. Woodward has already accumulated a great deal of information and experience about the industry which will stand him in good stead as Chairman. As Chairman his role will be to attempt to secure agreement over the widest area.

If the Conference succeeds, the purpose of the Woodward Inquiry will be achieved over a large area of its terms of reference. If it fails the areas of disagreement will be revealed and Mr. Woodward could then let the Government have his own views on these matters.

As well, there were some matters covered by Mr. Woodward's Terms of Reference which go beyond the charter of the Conference. I have made it clear to Mr. Monk that the Government expects Mr. Woodward to give first priority to the business of the Conference.

I also pointed out to Mr. Monk that it was essential, during the Conference, there should be no port or national stoppages except as authorised by the Award and that disputes arising over on-the-job issues should be dealt with on all occasions by established procedures; for example, by the Industrial Relations Committees provided for by the 1963 National Conferences and Boards of Reference.

The Department of Labour and National Service and A.S.I.A. will at an early date discuss with the A.C.T.U., the W.W.F. and the Employers of Waterfront Labour the arrangements which will apply to the procedures for the recruitment of waterside workers by the Authority.

CANBERRA,
13th October, 1965.