

COMMON MARKET DISCUSSIONS

(Statement by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade,
Mr. J. McEwen)

The Minister for Trade, Mr. McEwen, today confirmed press reports that Australia was seeking the right to be present and to speak during the negotiations between Britain and the E.E.C. countries at times when matters affecting Australia's trade interests were under discussion .

"This question," said Mr. McEwen, "is regarded as one of very great importance by the Australian Government. We discussed it with Mr. Duncan Sandys the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, when he was in Australia last July. The communique which described the talks between Mr. Sandys and Australian Ministers made it plain that the Australian Government considered that Australia should be in a position to negotiate direct on Australia's behalf when details and arrangements affecting items of Australian trade were being discussed."

The Australian Government, Mr. McEwen explained, felt that the case for Australia's export industries could not be put by anybody as well as by Australia. It was not enough to be consulted from a distance. Australian Ministers believed it essential that when the discussions in Brussels got on to wheat or dried fruits, or other commodities which Australia exported to Britain, then Australia should be inside the negotiating room, aware of what was going on and in a position to explain the nature of Australia's trade interests.

Mr. McEwen said that the British Government had readily agreed that it would, at an appropriate time, raise the question with the Common Market countries of Australia's participation in the negotiations.

"Of course," said Mr. McEwen, "Australia does not and cannot claim to take a full part in the negotiations which concern the conditions of Britain's possible entry into the Common Market. The status which Australia seeks, and which

Britain supports, is one that would give Australian representatives an appropriate basis to speak on matters that bear directly on Australian trade interests that stand to be affected by the possible entry of Britain into the Common Market."

Mr. McEwen said that the Governments of the Six had been made aware of the views of the Australian Government on this matter. They would know how strongly the Australian Government felt about it. They would, he hoped, see advantage to themselves as well as to Australia and Britain in having Australian representatives present when the discussions concerned arrangements for products involved in Australia's trade with Britain.

"Last week," said Mr. McEwen, "Britain raised this matter of Australian participation at one of the regular meetings of the senior British and Common Market officials carrying on the negotiations. It was agreed at this meeting that the matter would be taken up at the next meeting, scheduled for February 22nd, of British and Common Market Ministers."

"Australian producers and exporters," Mr. McEwen added, "can be assured that the Australian Government has spared no effort to secure the right to be present and to speak on appropriate occasions during the negotiations in Brussels.

"The Australian Government appreciates the support being given by Britain to Australia's desires in this matter but clearly it now rests with the Common Market countries to decide whether to accede to the reasonable request that has formally been put forward by Britain on Australia's behalf."

Canberra,

7th February, 1962.

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