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R. W. MILLER TANKER

Statement by the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Sir  
Robert Menzies

"The matter of the conditions on which a foreign-built ship should or should not be permitted to be licensed under our Navigation Act to trade on the Australian coast raises quite a number of difficult questions, including the future of the Australian shipbuilding industry," Sir Robert Menzies said in Canberra today. "Several of my colleagues will be submitting papers to Cabinet on various aspects of the problem. The formulation of policy will not be an easy exercise when it is understood that there are such significant aspects as shipbuilding, foreign exchange, costs and the overall fuel position to be taken into consideration. I cannot at present anticipate what policy will be evolved."

"Pending the formulation and announcement of its policy on these matters, the Government has decided to allow R. W. Miller & Co. Pty. Ltd. to import the oil tanker MERCHANT KNIGHT under the Customs (prohibited Imports) Regulations and to license this ship under the Navigation Act, on the conditions that the tanker will be operated on the Australian coast and under Australian Articles. Having regard to the fact that tankers now operate from time to time along the Australian coast under overseas registration and manning conditions, we cannot reasonably refuse R. W. Miller & Co.'s present application, which is to import a tanker, register it in Australia, and operate it under Australian manning conditions."

Sir Robert emphasised that the decision to allow the import of this tanker should not be regarded as creating a precedent. No other application to import a tanker would be considered until the whole position had been thoroughly examined by the Government.

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CANBERRA,

26th July, 1963.