

Press Statement by The Rt.Hon J. McEwen, M.P., Acting Prime Minister
and Minister for Trade and Industry

Mr. McEwen today commended the decision of Lines in the U.K./Continent Conference to further rationalize their service in this trade.

"Any reduction in transit time for goods, with a consequent holding back of shipping costs, could only benefit the competitive position of Australian exports in Australia's most important market area", Mr. McEwen said.

The Minister also cited the decision as an example of the benefits of a closed conference system which worked in close co-operation with a representative shipper body, assisted by Government research and analysis. In this case, "Mr. McEwen said, "negotiations between the Shipping Lines and the Shippers were greatly assisted by the initiative of the Department of Trade & Industry, which produced its "computer study" in 1964. This study, designed and implemented by the Department of Trade & Industry and the Bureau of Census and Statistics, not only measured the possible savings of such an operation, but also established the feasibility of scheduling the Conference fleet on a rationalized basis so as to lift all available cargoes on a regular basis".

He anticipated that the implementation of the scheme would call for the fullest co-operation from all bodies engaged in liner cargo shipping. He said that Australian exporters should welcome these new efforts to contain the rising costs of overseas shipping, while recognising that some adjustments to their traditional arrangements might be necessary.

Mr. McEwen also expressed his belief that this was the first occasion that this technique had been used to ensure a co-operative attack on conference shipping costs under normal commercial conditions. "Clearly, Australian exporters to other areas and shipping lines servicing those exporters will be watching this new move to improve conference efficiency with keen interest," the Minister concluded.

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