Australia participated in the previous rounds of tariff negotiations held in Geneva, Annecy and Torquay and gave effect to the concessions we granted to other Contracting Parties in those negotiations. Since the Torquay Conference five years ago, we have had a review of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade completed as recently as March last year. The results of the review await acceptance by the requisite number of countries before coming into full effect. Australia participated actively in that review of the Agreement giving expression to its point of view.

It will be recalled that Australia and some other Contracting Parties opposed the proposal to include in the revised Agreement an obligation to enter into tariff negotiations. We also stated that it would not be possible for Australia to join in a plan for tariff reductions according to a set formula and that we considered that any further negotiations should follow the procedures which governed the Geneva, Annecy and Torquay negotiations.

We also believe that it is important to remember that the tariff is only one form of protective device and that the influence of tariff levels on world trade can easily be over-emphasised. Tariff reductions can mean little for Australia so long as agricultural production relies so heavily on forms of protection other than the tariff.

At this stage it would seem that the scope for Australia's participation in the negotiations is limited. This is partly because, with many products, our position as a supplier is not important enough to warrant our making requests, and also because certain contracting parties have indicated that they cannot negotiate on items of particular interest to our export trade.

I do not know how extensive the tariff negotiations of other contracting parties will be. It could well be that the results of the present negotiations may not be as spectacular as those achieved at our
three earlier conferences. We have however felt that Australia should not stand apart from the negotiations or arbitrarily limit the degree of our participation. The field for reduction of trade barriers is large, even if we limit our endeavours to the tariff and the other more obvious forms of protection. Australia has always been ready to play its part and our presence here indicates our continued willingness to co-operate with other contracting parties in the conclusion of mutually advantageous negotiations directed towards the reduction of barriers to international trade.