

MEMORANDUM FOR CABINET BY THE HON MINISTER
OF TRADE, INDUSTRY AND AGRICULTURE

Enactment of a Maritime Law

In July, 1965 a Sub-Committee of the Free Port Advisory Committee made specific recommendations for the enactment of a comprehensive Maritime Law.

2. In December, 1965 these recommendations, which were endorsed by the main Free Port Committee, were referred to the Crown Advocate General's Chambers with a request for the drafting of this complex legislation.

3. This Ministry understands that the drafting was taken in hand for some time, but then no further progress was made as consideration was being given to the enactment of a simple enabling law, leaving the publication of the regulations to a later date. This particular issue, however, had been fully considered before. The Free Port Advisory Committee decided in favour of the enactment of a comprehensive law.

4. Hon Ministers are aware that it is the policy of Government to produce a Maritime Law. The enactment of such legislation is expected to help in no small measure our industrialization drive by providing better shipping facilities. Certain provisions in the law might induce ships to call periodically in Malta and, apart from other considerations, these may effect repairs or maintenance in the Drydocks. The proposed legislation would no doubt provide also for a registration fee which, it is estimated, could yield some £1m a year to revenue. The registration of Shipping Companies in Malta will bring in its wake other concomitant activities and benefits which will have a direct impact on our economic development.

5. Considering that somehow, sometime, Malta will have a Free Trade Zone and that the success of such a development depends to a great extent on the enactment of the right type of maritime legislation, it is in the interest of such a development to have a comprehensive maritime legislation. An enabling law would not be of any tangible help and would improve existing arrangements to a very limited extent.

6. The vital need of enacting this law assumes larger proportions now that the Free Trade Zone proposals are being studied in all their implications and my Ministry is satisfied that no progress can ever be made unless a comprehensive Maritime Law be enacted to meet the current and future development in this field.

7. In the circumstances Hon Ministers are invited to re-confirm that a Maritime Law should be produced as a matter of priority, and that such law be a comprehensive one as recommended by the Free Port Advisory Committee. In view of the added importance which the enactment assumes in the light of current developments, the concurrence of Hon Ministers is also sought with a view that, keeping in mind the highly technical and specialised aspects of the legislation, a small legal commission be set up with urgency to assist the Law Officers in the drafting. This will expedite the finalisation of the proposed legislation.

21st February, 1967.
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