

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES



INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 53/6 INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION

An address by the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. L.D. Wilgress, to a meeting of the Canadian Council of the International Chamber of Commerce, Toronto, February 17, 1953.

The subject of my address to-day is "International Economic Co-operation". In a sense it is rather presumptuous of me to be speaking on such a subject to a gathering of this kind. The very existence of your Chamber is predicated on international economic co-operation. In your Chamber the businessmen of the world are showing how representatives of various countries can get together from time to time and put forward constructive proposals designed to bring about better co-operation between nations.

It is fitting, therefore, that you should consider in the Canadian Council the means by which the International Chamber of Commerce can propose to the different governments how they can bring about more effective international co-operation in the economic sphere.

I have had first-hand experience of the steps which have been taken to make the co-operation of governments in this sphere more effective. This has not always been very encouraging. I have attended a number of inter-governmental conferences on this subject, commencing with the World Financial and Economic Conference held in London under the auspices of the League of Nations in 1933 and ending with the Torquay Tariff Conference in the winter of 1950-51. In between there were the whole series of conferences and tariff negotiations designed to bring about international co-operation in the sphere of trade. These meetings led to the conclusion of the Havana Charter for an International Trade Organization, which proved to be still-born, and also to the conclusion of the General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade or the GATT, which is still very much alive. It is with this effort at international economic co-operation that I wish particularly to deal to-day.

The London Financial and Economic Conference took place at the depth of the depression and failed completely to bring about a joint effort by governments to solve the problems with which they were confronted. The result was that each country went more or less its own way in endeavouring to deal with the pressing problems of mass unemployment, under-production and fluctuating exchange rates. Instead of international economic co-operation we had international chaos brought about by the worst manifestations of economic nationalism.