



Statements and Speeches

No. 74/14

REKINDLING "THE SPIRIT OF OTTAWA"

Remarks by the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau, to the Commonwealth Finance Ministers' Meeting, Ottawa, September 25, 1974

I'm happy to be able to greet you all at the commencement of your Ottawa meeting. Commonwealth gatherings are particularly welcome in this country, as many of you know who have been in Canada on previous occasions. This is so because Canada regards the Commonwealth with much affection, and attaches to it considerable importance. In our view, there is simply no other association that permits men and women from virtually all parts of the world to gather so informally and so successfully to seek solutions to problems of common concern. In the Commonwealth, we employ our energies in attacking problems, not in attacking one another.

This is especially important in the work that brings you here this week. It is hard to believe that only 14 months have passed since heads of government met here in the summer of 1973. In that short period, the nations of the world have been faced with a series of economic shocks unparalleled, perhaps, in history. These have tested to the breaking-point the resilience of the international trading and monetary systems, and have tested beyond the breaking-point the resilience of some national economies. The issues now before us are so broad, and the remedies required of us are so complex, that no single conference -- not even one of the breadth and goodwill of this one -- can hope to be more than the beginning of a long process.

But how important is that beginning! How important it is that the peoples of all our countries can be assured that their governments have identified at least some of the problems and have agreed on the path that must be travelled in order to deal with them. Of those problems, one of the most fundamental is a failure of confidence: in ourselves and in our ability to act effectively. This meeting, I hope, will be marked by a great demonstration of confidence, for it is an essential element in the world economic structure. And it is perhaps the only element in the world monetary structure that is of any consequence at all.

In that meeting of heads of government in 1973, something that has come to be called "The Spirit of Ottawa" was either discovered or created (I'm not certain which), but certainly experienced.
