



## STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION  
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 51/33      GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

An address by the Minister of Trade and Commerce, Mr. C.D. Howe, delivered to the Sixth Session of Contracting Parties, General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, at Geneva, on September 17, 1951.

...It is barely four years since October 1947 when the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade was drawn up and signed by the representatives of 23 countries. Since then, the scope of the GATT has steadily increased. Prestige and experience have accrued to the work of the Contracting Parties. It is not too soon to say that this organization has demonstrated its usefulness. It has already more than paid for itself through the results which have been achieved. The GATT has earned its place in the front rank amongst international organizations. Today there are 37 participating countries and most of them are represented here. Multilateral tariff negotiations have been organized on three occasions and have been carried through to a successful conclusion.

There have been various occasions on which outside observers have said that a crisis had been reached or that approaching difficulties would prove insurmountable. The General Agreement was itself the product of arduous negotiations and compromises. Many people wondered, prior to Torquay, whether it would be possible to arrange for the prolongation of the life of the tariff concessions which were negotiated at Geneva and Annecy. When the time came, it was found possible to continue the large bulk of earlier tariff concessions for a further period of three years, along with the new concessions negotiated at Torquay. Only a very small number of tariff items had to be renegotiated. Rather than a crisis or a defeat, this proved to be one of the major accomplishments of the GATT. Similarly, there was disappointment at the failure of some of the participants at Torquay to conclude new tariff agreements, these including some of the countries most important in world trade. As the months have gone by, in spite of this, we have noticed that commercial relations amongst these same countries have continued on an amicable basis without noticeable impairment. The countries in question have all continued to adhere to the General Agreement and the results of their earlier tariff negotiations have continued in force.

The GATT was organized as a collective international effort to get rid of obstacles to trade, to reduce tariffs and to minimize the scope of quantitative restrictions. Surely these are objectives to which all countries could give their encouragement and support. However after having been a member of the Canadian Government for sixteen years one thing at least I have learned. Whether we have prosperity or depression and whether we have war or peace, there is always