



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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THE GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

An address by the Minister of Trade and Commerce, Mr. C.D. Howe, made to the eighth session of the Contracting Parties to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, at Geneva, September 18, 1953.

I wish to say a few words on behalf of the Canadian delegation. It gives me great pleasure to be here again today. This is my second appearance at a session of the contracting parties to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, although this is the eighth session of the contracting parties. I look forward to more regular attendance in the future.

Our main task at this session is to ensure continued progress in the development of mutually advantageous trade among the nations of the world. I sincerely trust that we shall not be diverted from this task by other matters, which, however important they may be, are subsidiary to the main purpose. I would go further and express the hope that our deliberations will be inspired by a measure of that spirit of urgency and enthusiasm which gave birth to this great experiment in multilateral trading relationships.

It is common in my country, as it probably is in some of yours, to blame trade difficulties on the General Agreement. This is perhaps natural, because those who feel that their interests are adversely affected by the General Agreement are inclined to be more vocal than those who benefit. When trade developments are adverse, those affected blame the General Agreement; when trade improves those benefitting take the credit for themselves. While we all know that the GATT is an imperfect document, that improvement is possible and we all hope that steps towards improvement will not be too long delayed, I am convinced that, without the General Agreement, the dislocations resulting from the Second World War would have been much more persistent. I believe that all those associated with bringing the General Agreement into being must feel a sense of satisfaction in the accomplishments to date.

I do not intend, to express at this time the views of my Government on all of the important items of business arising at this session. I do wish, however, to refer to some matters related to the agenda, which I believe to be particularly important for the future.

I count myself amongst the supporters of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. It is not a perfect instrument, for there are deficiencies and weaknesses in its provisions. It was drafted in troubled times, at the end of the war, as a temporary measure. Some of its important provisions represent only the common ground which could be reached, at that time, between different points of view. In spite of such a modest