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GATT ON THE THRESHOLD OF A NEW ECONOMIC ERA

Statement by the Honourable Robert H. Winters,
Minister of Trade and Commerce, to the Ministerial
Session of the Gatt Meeting, Geneva, November 22,
1967.

I think it was Hegel who said that people and governments neither learn from history nor act on the principles deduced from it. The fact that ministers and senior representatives from about 50 countries are meeting here on the twentieth anniversary of the GATT is, I believe, a refutation of this dictum.

We meet following the successful conclusion of the Kennedy Round, to consider a new programme for the expansion of world trade, and thus to lay the basis for a further attack on trade barriers in the years ahead.

For over two decades, governments have worked together, through the GATT and the other international institutions, to raise living-standards, maintain high levels of employment and expand production and trade.

This has been a striking reversal of the autarkic policies of the prewar period and a signal demonstration that the lessons of history have been learned. There is a singular unity of view among historians on one point: the sharp increase in trade barriers and discrimination which marked the prewar period, far from solving problems, only served to impoverish the world. It was the promise of another world - where nations are not rivals in their efforts to grow and prosper but necessary partners -- that gave birth to the GATT, the IMF and the World Bank. These institutions, now joined by UNCTAD, represent landmarks in the development of the multilateral system of trade and payments which is surely one of the major and most solid achievements of postwar international co-operation.

Canada is among the world's foremost trading nations, heavily dependent on international commerce for its prosperity, for the development of its resources and the efficient expansion of its secondary industry. It is an open economy, oriented to the world market. Canada is also one of the middle powers, particularly conscious of the interdependence of nations and of the importance of the "rule of law" in international trade. Canada has thus been a strong and active supporter of the GATT since its inception.