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THE COMMONWEALTH AND GATT

The following statement on Canada's role in the meeting of the Commonwealth Economic Consultative Committee held in London on May 13 and 14 and in the meeting in Geneva from May 16 to 21 of trade ministers of countries adhering to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade was made to the House of Commons on May 24 by the Minister of Trade and Commerce, Mr. Mitchell Sharp:

...At the London meetings, I was impressed by the variety of the modern Commonwealth. It is a reflection in miniature of the free world as a whole. The whole spectrum of needs and aspirations is represented. Britain is a highly developed industrial country. Canada and Australia are major exporters of agricultural and primary products as well as manufactures of more limited scale. New Zealand is almost entirely dependent on agriculture. Significantly, the modern Commonwealth includes a majority of newly-independent countries only recently embarked on the process of development and diversification. It was a rewarding experience for me to meet the trade ministers of the new, as well as the older, members of the Commonwealth.

In London we were able to discuss in the unique and understanding atmosphere of Commonwealth meetings the interests and approaches of the different members to the major current issues of trade and development. Three main trade questions were on the agenda: (a) the expansion of the trade of developing countries, (b) world trade in agriculture

and (c) the proposal for a further major round of negotiations to reduce tariffs and other barriers to world trade. The meeting was also able to review the situation in Europe and to hear from British ministers about developments since the termination of the Brussels negotiations.

Ministers recognized the continuing significance of Commonwealth trade. We also agreed on the need for a general expansion of world trade and on the importance of this for all Commonwealth countries.

NEEDS OF EMERGENT NATIONS

...The needs of the less-advanced countries of the Commonwealth received full recognition. Canada joined with other members of the Commonwealth in promising our support for action to help meet these needs, both at the subsequent GATT ministerial meeting and in the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

AIMS OF GATT CONFERENCE

In Geneva, at the GATT session, the purpose was to come to grips on a world-wide basis with the three major trade problems discussed in London. These problems are difficult and complex and many conflicting interests remain to be resolved in the long negotiations that lie ahead. Nevertheless the countries concerned have agreed to come to the negotiating table and a start will be made. This was a tremendous and heartening achievement.

(Over)