

Statement on U.S. Trade Expansion Act

world trade. In this connection the recent discussions in Ottawa between officials of our two governments have been most useful. I have been thinking that, after some of the preliminary work has been done and a consensus reached among the principal participants, a ministerial meeting early in 1963 of the contracting parties of the general agreement on tariffs and trade might well be the most suitable way to enlist the participation and support of like minded nations.

On the basis of your proposal for an international meeting, perhaps we might join forces in recommending a special meeting of the contracting parties at the ministerial level, to be held possibly as early as February or March of 1963. I should be interested in your reactions to this suggestion.

I am encouraged by the improvement in Canada's reserve position and welcome the first step you have just taken in the process of removing the special surcharges on imports in response to this improvement. I look forward to your being able to remove the remaining surcharges. This would help us all move forward in our attack on trade barriers.

Sincerely,

John F. Kennedy.

So President Kennedy has accepted the proposal I made for a ministerial meeting of like minded nations—and again I emphasize his use of those words twice in his letter to me, thereby excluding other similar suggestions which have been made. He has proposed that Canada and the United States, on the basis of my suggestion, should join in recommending a special meeting of the contracting parties. I am very glad the President has done so, and I look forward to the closest co-operation with the United States and other trading countries in bringing together other like minded nations in a common effort to deal with the trade problems facing us all in a constructive and positive manner. Instructions are being given to the Canadian delegation to next week's meeting of the general agreement on tariffs and trade to take action along these lines. I am sure that a ministerial meeting of like minded trading nations such as I have proposed will have the most far reaching and beneficial results throughout the free world. I expressed the hope that hon. members and the people of Canada as a whole will agree that this is a most important and hopeful development which opens great possibilities for our trade and for the Canadian economy as a whole.

Hon. L. B. Pearson (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I think all members of the house will have listened with great interest to the Prime Minister giving the house the details about the correspondence exchanged between himself and the President of the United States and which was, of course, initiated by himself. There can be no doubt that all members of this house will be only too anxious to do what they can to support the government in its efforts to join with other governments in the removal of obstacles to trade and in developing the freest possible

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

trade between all countries. No doubt my hon. friends opposite would include in that communist China and Cuba.

There can also be no question about the desirability of having this government and indeed this parliament co-operate to the fullest possible extent with the constructive program initiated in Washington by President Kennedy and approved by congress. Indeed, we on this side have been advocating that kind of co-operation and association for many months when in other quarters this program did not seem to arouse very much interest.

The Prime Minister has now explained to the house what he meant in his original letter by a meeting of ministers. Presumably this is a meeting now of ministers of like minded nations. Presumably the later conference which is to be arranged, if it can be arranged as a result of this preliminary meeting in Geneva, will be a conference of all like minded nations. Presumably therefore, Mr. Speaker, any country that wishes to consider itself a like minded nation will be invited to this conference.

May I remind the Prime Minister that there is opening next week in Geneva a meeting of the contracting parties of GATT at which, if this government is really interested in pushing this matter forward, it might have had a minister present to begin the conversations at the present time. However, Mr. Speaker, at this GATT conference of contracting parties Canada will be represented not by a minister but by an official. While he is a very highly qualified and competent official, he is still an official. This would have been a good time to begin this process of ministerial consultation.

It is also true, Mr. Speaker,—and the Prime Minister has referred to it—that there is on the order paper at the United Nations assembly a proposal for a United Nations conference to remove barriers to trade. No doubt the government will be considering how it can relate its proposal for a conference of like minded nations to this proposal for a conference of all members of the United Nations to broaden the boundaries of trade.

In any event, we on this side welcome the government's last minute conversion and desire to co-operate with the United States in this matter. However, I would point out that a process which would be more encouraging for immediate results, as it would have been a year ago, would be to work with the United States, the European common market, the United Kingdom and the commonwealth in order to reduce barriers within