



# Statements and Speeches

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No. 74/15

## THE COMMONWEALTH -- CAULDRON, NOT MELTING-POT

Statement by the Honourable John N. Turner, Minister of Finance, to the Opening Session of the Commonwealth Finance Ministers' Meeting, Ottawa, September 25, 1975.

I want to congratulate the Secretary-General and the staff of the Secretariat for the work they have done in putting it all together. And I think, on a personal note, that my colleagues would allow me to say to you, Mr. Secretary-General, that we are very proud of you, as an exile from this country and as a great international public servant, for what you have done for the cause of the Commonwealth and world understanding over the terms of office you have held. Welcome back to Ottawa.

The Secretary-General has mentioned some of the problems that are going to occupy us:

Inflation, what it is doing to human beings around the world.

The risks of recession, if these problems are not handled well by human beings, by us and by our other colleagues.

The risks of trade barriers, and deflationary policies in the world, and locking us into fragments and compartments.

The recycling of surplus funds caused by the quadrupling of oil prices last year.

The deep crisis for the developing world.

The Secretary-General has mentioned the prices of fuels, and food and fertilizer.

The spectre of famine in many parts of the world and some parts of the world represented by ministers here.

And I think your remark was put very well, Mr. Smith, when you said, for some of us in the developed world, it is a question of tightening our belts; for some of the gentlemen around the table and their people, it is a question of life or death.

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This is a prelude this week to the International Monetary Fund and World Bank conferences next week in Washington. And I think our conversations here will have some influence on the deliberations there. And what better forum than this, under the auspices of the Commonwealth. We are bound together in a great global adventure. There is no historical precedent for the type of association we have -- no constitution, no articles of association, no formalized structure, a voluntary association of free and independent people all of us enjoying equality of status around this table. And yet we link every race, every colour, every creed, every continent. We are not a melting-pot of cultures; we are a cauldron to stir the ideas of six continents.

We in Canada look to the Commonwealth as a vehicle for peace, as an avenue towards world understanding. We consider the Commonwealth to be, next to the United Nations, the most universal and fruitful of our human associations. It has been a grand experiment, it has been a creative model of collective human dignity.

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