Mr. Chairman, before I address myself to the substance of the matter before the meeting, perhaps you will allow me to take up a few minutes of the time of the Contracting Parties to say how happy I am to be privileged to take part, not indeed for the first time in a discussion in this room, but for the first time in a session of a body which is seeking to further, by action in the field of international trade policy, the cause of cooperation and friendship between the peoples of the world which in this room have so often been the subject of debate. I happen to belong also to the House of Commons in my country and I hope that you will give me here the indulgence which is accorded to members of the House of Commons when they are making their maiden speech in that body and that you will not call me to order if I make at the outset some general remarks about the General Agreement which may not appear to be strictly relevant to the subject which is immediately before us.

The work of the Contracting Parties is of perhaps somewhat special importance and interest to us in the United Kingdom as co-signatories with the United States of the Atlantic Charter which contained the first seed from which the present organisation of the Contracting Parties has grown and again as close associates with the United States in the evolution of the 1945 commercial policy proposals which were the first blueprint for international co-operation in the field of trade and employment after the war. A great deal has happened since those two documents were published and a number of those of us who are here to-day have participated throughout the series of conferences over the last five years in London, New York, Geneva, Havana, Geneva, Annecy, Geneva, Torquay and now again in Geneva, which represent the history up to now of what has no doubt been a notable international enterprise. The whole of the very arduous work of these various conferences has not come to full fruition but I am sure that the efforts which went to the drawing up of the Havana Charter were by no means made in vain. Even if we do not have the International Trade Organisation which we hoped at the end of the war might be brought into being the Governments which constitute the Contracting Parties to the General Agreement have, I think, already got quite an impressive record of cooperative effort in which, I hope, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom have played their proper part. And I am very happy to come here to-day as leader of the United Kingdom Delegation to a further session of the Contracting Parties. Mr. Chairman, we politicians, though perhaps birds of a brighter plumage are also birds of a quicker passage than some of the experts and we in the United Kingdom have always attached a great deal of importance to continuity of representation in this organisation. We are very pleased to see M. Suetens again in the Belgian chair. To him, to Mr. Wilgress and to yourself as our present Chairman, this body has owed a very great deal.

Mr. Chairman, there is only one further general observation which I would like to make and this I ought to emphasise without equivocation. One of my colleagues has already made clear yesterday, in terms which I endorse, that within the next year or two my Government in common no doubt with Governments of other contracting parties will wish to review the whole operation of the General Agreement as it at present exists in the light of our experience up to date. So far the United Kingdom Government like other Governments has not felt able to commit itself finally to the General
Agreement, and we shall need to consider how far its present provisions, with the undoubted restrictions which they impose on us in such matters, for example, as preference between Commonwealth countries and with their unsatisfactory bearing on the relations between the Contracting Parties and the International Monetary Fund, are counter-balanced by tangible advantages in the promotion of world trade. In these the United Kingdom must have its proper share. I make no further comment on that at this time but whatever the merits and demerits of the General Agreement in its present form, whatever its future may be, the idea which underlined it of having a code of good and friendly international behaviour in the field of trade policy is a commendable one which we support. Even more valuable is perhaps the idea of a body such as the Contracting Parties which can meet together at intervals and work out joint action to promote that kind of code. The existence of a code of rules, whatever its precise scope and content may be, is necessary both for the direct benefits which flow from it and in order to give point and purpose to the meetings and discussions of the Contracting Parties. It is in a spirit of enquiry as to its practical utility that we approach the present proposal. We feel that at this time when there are already in existence a multiplicity of international bodies, some of which are perhaps less useful than the expenditure of experts' time and taxpayers' money on them might have entitled us to hope, new accretions of international machinery ought not to be established unless a clear case has been made out to show that they will in practice achieve useful results. I am, and my Government is, a life-long supporter of the fullest possible degree of international co-operation. But that co-operation is not always promoted by the mere multiplication of formal pieces of international machinery and we are not convinced that a Standing Committee of the Contracting Parties would, in the present provisional stage of the General Agreement, be a useful thing. This is not to say that we do not feel that great advantage derives from the very fact of representatives of so many countries meeting together periodically and acting together for the achievement of common ideals is of itself something of considerable value; the mutual understanding achieved and the friendships across many frontiers which are formed between the men and women engaged in the capitals of their countries on the vital work of economic policy and administration is a development of the post-war years from which intangible but great benefits have flowed and still continue to flow to the peoples of all our countries. This is a development of great significance for the well-being and unity of nations and it is a refreshing experience to come here to-day for the first time and to be able to take part in the work of a body, in the day-to-day work of a body, which has such wide and multifarious responsibilities and which can and should make so notable a combination of high ideals and practical realism. And indeed Mr. Chairman I want to stress the word "practical".