Mr. Chairman, Your Excellencies, Gentlemen,

I am most conscious of the honour you, Mr. Chairman, have done me tonight in asking me to speak. I have been in the fortunate, and unusual, position of being at once on a brief holiday and in close contact with those who are not. It is said in my country that the onlooker sees all the game. I do not profess to have seen all the moves even in today's play of the intricate game you are engaged in.

I must apologise for the fact that I believe it was partly due to the United Kingdom Delegation that you have been at work today and not enjoying the beauties of this lovely place. In my country we believe in working hard and playing hard, whether in war or peace.

If we and our fellow members of the Commonwealth were able to afford some measure of help to our neighbours in the critical days of the war, it was and is the outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual friendship with all countries that are, like my own, passionately devoted to freedom and to peace. France may well be taken as a shining example to us all of a country which, not seeking war but having war thrust upon her, yet never let the spark of freedom die even when all seemed lost. I have read, and read with much sympathy, the moving references which you, Sir, and the Mayor, and our good friend André Philip, made a week ago, to that period and to those individual sacrifices. I will not seek to emulate those speeches but still I wish to pay my own small tribute to France, as brave as she is fair.
And with these great qualities of France there goes a real and charming hospitality. I know that my colleagues who form the Delegation of the United Kingdom are happy to be here and, in such lucid intervals as their work and yours may permit, will continue to enjoy all that France, in this famous Province, has to offer them. I could wish that time permitted my colleagues greater opportunities in this direction since to know France and other countries like her is not only a pleasure but an education.

I have spoken of our common love of freedom and of peace. We feel that no sacrifice is too great to maintain this way of life, even the temporary loss of much which seems of its essence. I am fresh from the House of Commons at Westminster where we have been debating what all here would recognize to be a very stern national budget after so many years of toil and tears. You will believe me that I do not speak tonight for any one party in our political arena when I say, and say with a certain pride, that our people are still ready to put up with great sacrifices and even hardship because they know that to be the road to recovery, to freedom and to peace.

It is a long road. It would have been longer but for the generous help of the Government and people of the United States. Not the least of the benefits which we have derived from that help is an added stimulus to cooperative action. The countries of Europe are together looking facts in the face. It is my experience in the United Kingdom that what people want is to be told the facts. They prefer to know the worst rather than have an uneasy feeling that their Government is holding something unpalatable back from them. So our dominating problem, which we know as the dollar gap, has been brought home to Berlin and to our business world and to the country as a whole. We are not concealing from them that the last part of the road may well be the steepest. I am really an optimist that we shall succeed. But we do not want it to be at anyone else's expense. That we should not call success, though temporarily it might look like success. The world has at least learnt that lesson, and that is why you are here in Annecy.

The last time I spoke to representatives of parties to the G.A.T.T. was in the concluding Plenary Session of the first stage of the Geneva Conference, in August 1947. On that occasion, I said that the work of the conference had proceeded against the background of a darkening storm in world economic affairs; and referring to Mr. Marshall's Harvard Speech, I said how much, in my mind, our joint recovery would depend on close economic cooperation here in Europe, as well as -- for our part -- the development of yet closer economic ties with our Commonwealth friends, and short-term arrangements for increasing trade on bilateral lines. We all realised, I think, that all these measures would be necessary to right the grave unbalance in world trade and payments; for until that could be done we could not hope to see fully realised the great gains to the world as a whole, and to the people of each country which would result from the full working out of the Geneva Agreement. The past two years have seen great advances on the road to world recovery, through closer economic cooperation between nations, and the
individual production achievements and sacrifices of each individual country. But no one here will for one moment fail to realize how long and hard the road still is, for the world as a whole, and for each individual country. Only by continued production efforts, by sacrifices, and above all by hard work, can recovery be achieved.

Gentlemen, these are hard times to live in. But the very challenge of the times makes life worth while. I have spoken of difficulties. I could speak of dangers. But still there is a great challenge to be met and courage to meet it. I believe a new spirit does exist. We should, each of us, like to see things easier for us as individuals or as families. But we want much more than that. We want to see poverty, insecurity and bad conditions done away with throughout the world. This is the divine discontent of our time, a finer and more effective driving force than the principle of each man for himself. With the younger generation in particular, the comparative child who is the father of the man, the needs of the times constitute an appeal and a challenge.

All I have said, you may well say, has been in general terms. It would be inappropriate for me to try to discuss in detail the work on which you are engaged in Annecy. And I know how detailed it is, and must be. Perhaps this marks out the general agreement and the negotiations carried out under it - and the same will apply to the International Trade Organization - from many of the other international activities which have started since the war. Criticisms have been levelled against us in Britain, perhaps they are levelled elsewhere, at the great amount of time such negotiations involve. But, gentlemen, you are getting down to earth, what you are dealing with are not theoretical matters, they touch the hard facts of commercial life and necessarily they involve much patient study and discussion of details.

That grip on tangible problems is one characteristic of the General Agreement and of the Charter. Another is surely this. Hitherto, the programme to which we have been working has been carried out, and carried out up to time, in a way which has surprised many people in many lands. I confess that I was inclined myself to doubt whether such speedy and orderly progress would be possible. It is not only possible, it is being made, and as a representative of one of the founding members, as it were, of this very important Club I should like to say how glad we are that its membership is growing. It is, we hope, going to become one of the best clubs in the world, where important business can be carried out in an atmosphere of intimacy and friendship among nations.

Rightly and necessarily a feeling of solidarity, of common interest in common problems, is spreading over a large part of the world. The process of mutual discussion, long and even tedious as it may often be, is itself but a reflection of that feeling.
And who would deny that this process is right and proper? Who would underrate the advantage of personal acquaintance and personal friendship which springs from such meetings? This is but the method which has enabled the members of the British Commonwealth to settle many problems and we have found that among friends discussion may be frank and direct, and not too greatly hampered by the older conventions of diplomacy.

I am sorry if I have kept you too long. You have worked today, tomorrow you will have a heavier day, I expect. There is an urgency about the work you are doing. There is an opportunity now which may not recur for reducing barriers to trade. There is also a heavy pressure on the members of the various Delegations who all have problems piling up at home. I know well that many of you and of your colleagues have that uneasy feeling that they ought to be in at least two places at one and the same time. So far science has not made that possible. Never perhaps has the pressure on public servants been so great. But it is worthwhile. What is done today will make a difference in centuries to come. Not one of us is really satisfied by the argument that what happens when we are dead does not matter to us. We can be grateful to those who built the solid stone churches and arcades of Annecy that they did not believe in that argument. When the structure which we are building here is as old as those churches and arcades, we shall, perhaps, be looked on as primitive pioneers. But I for one should like to think that future generations will feel that, nonetheless, and difficult as the times were, we pioneers built well and truly.

Annecy, April 18.