

PREFACE

The papers included in this volume were prepared to assist the Group of Experts which Commonwealth Heads of Government at their Meeting in Melbourne in October 1981 requested the Secretary-General to assemble in order "to investigate the impact of protection on developing country trade and report in time to assist governments in their preparations for the proposed GATT Ministerial Meeting". During the first half of 1982 the Group met three times, and in July 1982 their Report was published by the Commonwealth Secretariat under the title "Protectionism: Threat to International Order; The Impact on Developing Countries".

Most of the papers were drafted within the two months between the first and second meetings of the Group. Three were written by consultants to the Secretariat and the remainder by staff of the Commonwealth Secretariat. The short time available for the work ruled out new and major research efforts, and the papers represent an effort to assemble, digest and present background information on some of the principal issues pertinent to the Group's terms of reference. Conclusions expressed in the papers are, of course, those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of members of the Group or of Commonwealth Governments.

Eight issues are covered by the papers, viz, the multilateral trade negotiations and their effect on developing countries, non-tariff measures, the evolution and evaluation of generalised schemes of preference, agricultural protection, protection on manufactured goods, tariff escalation, safeguard action and adjustment and the machinery for disputes settlement.

Despite the short time in which most of the papers were drafted, it was felt that their content would be of interest to a wider audience than the Group of Experts for whom they were written. It should, however, be emphasised that no attempt has been made to update or otherwise revise the papers in the light of subsequent developments.

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