consideration of specific actions, guided by fairly general value premises (peace, efficiency, growth, employment, egalitarianism, etc.), but guided also by the force of public debate with full disclosure required. While each government must retain the right to interpret any agreement (or lack of agreement) as regards its own acts of trade intervention, this interpretation must be informed by an understanding of the common economic interest. This is an inescapable consideration. Trade conflicts can intensify political bitterness; agreement on their solution among governments determined not to escalate the conflicts can have the opposite effect.

The fact of common tenure of the industrial economy is making imperative among nations, and more and more recognized, a point of view which is the nucleus of an ethic; it might be called the ethic of economic agreement. Stated simply, it is that intergovernment economic discussions must, for the common good, be persisted in to the point of agreement. The hope of the future seems to lie in coordinating economic activities of governments by agreement—without resorting to arbitrary political pressure.

The word agreement need not mean a signed and delivered document. It can be as little as that negative kind of agreement where each keeps the others fully informed of its unilateral acts and the discussion of differences continues in an atmosphere of reciprocal efforts at persuasion. This is implicit in a society of human beings sharing a common living space and a common source of wealth.

Perhaps the greatest contribution that the acknowledgment of this ethic can make, however, is to reinforce the processes by which the greater and greater unity which characterizes economic reality is brought to bear against political fragmentation.