PLANS AND PROCEDURES FOR CONSULTATIONS

(Note by the United Kingdom Delegation)

The United Kingdom delegation were invited at the opening meeting of the Committee to suggest for consideration by the Committee possible methods and procedures by which consultations about agricultural policies might be carried out. After consultation with a number of other contracting parties, the United Kingdom delegation have set out some suggestions in the following note. For convenience these suggestions have been presented in the form of draft paragraphs which might in due course be incorporated into the Report which is to be presented by the Committee to the CONTRACTING PARTIES at the Fourteenth Session.

Plans and procedures for consultations about agricultural policies

1. Consultations held under the GATT should be focussed on the effects of agricultural policies on international trade in relation to the objectives of the General Agreement. With these considerations in mind, the Committee in accordance with their first and third terms of reference have considered procedures for consultations between all contracting parties on agricultural policies. They suggest that the following procedures would be appropriate.

2. Each contracting party should consult in its turn. To consult with all the contracting parties about the whole range of their policies would, however, be a task which would take many months, and the Committee have therefore considered how the task could be reduced to manageable proportions. For this purpose and in order to avoid undue delay in entering upon consultations, the Committee suggest that the first round of discussions should be concentrated mainly on the measures applied to certain specific groups of products entering importantly into international trade and we suggest the following: dairy products, meat, cereals, sugar and vegetable oils. As each country in turn presented itself for consultation there would be first some brief discussion on its general agricultural policy followed by more detailed questioning and discussion of its policies in relation
to such of this list of products as was applicable. In this way the Committee would expect that the consultations would provide a reasoned picture of the types, extent and effects of the protective measures employed in respect of the important groups of agricultural commodities entering into international trade and at the same time of the agricultural policies of the individual countries as they affect production or trade.

3. The consultations would not be restricted to a factual examination but would provide an opportunity for the frank exchange of views about the problems which the consulting country sought to solve through its agricultural policies, the reasons for its choice of the particular types of measures used, the effects of these measures on the trade of other contracting parties and upon its own economy, and the scope for and prospects of modifying those policies where they constituted a barrier to international trade.

4. The consultations would be conducted (a) on the basis of background papers supplied by each consulting country. These background papers would be based on the country papers prepared for the Committee, subject to certain additions and revisions which may be suggested in the course of the Committee's work, and (b) on the basis of a Plan for Consultations which would be in the hands of all contracting parties including the consulting country. Discussion would not, of course, be restricted to the topics included in the Plan; but it would serve as a useful guide for the conduct of the consultations. A suggested Plan is annexed to this Report to be produced by a Working Party.

5. The consultations should be conducted each year by a Committee appointed from year to year by the CONTRACTING PARTIES. (Compare the Balance-of-Payments Committee, para. 12, p.94, 7th Supplement BISD). This Committee would report annually or at more frequent intervals if it considered this desirable, to the CONTRACTING PARTIES. It is suggested that the CONTRACTING PARTIES should appoint Committee II for this task and should appoint a Vice-Chairman to assist the Chairman of the Committee.

6. The procedures suggested above should of course be subject to review in the light of experience.

7. Whilst the objective should be to complete the consultations with all contracting parties over the next twelve months the Committee suggest that a start should be made by consulting with the major industrial countries as soon as possible after the Fifteenth Session. It will doubtless be necessary to conduct the consultations in more than one group spread over the rest of the coming twelve months but the final time-table should be decided by the CONTRACTING PARTIES in the light of the rest of their work programme.

8. The Executive Secretary should provide such assistance as the Committee may request.