INTERNATIONAL TRADE INFORMATION CENTRE

Views of Contracting Parties

At its last meeting, Committee III instructed the secretariat, inter alia, to enquire from contracting parties as to the potential demand for the type of information to be covered by the proposed "International Trade Information Centre" (L/1925, paragraph 49). The secretariat wrote to a number of contracting parties to seek their views on this, as well as other questions relating to the proposal. A few contracting parties have replied to the questions and the information thus obtained is reproduced or briefly summarized below.

I. General Comments on the Need for this Service

France

"... it does not appear, at first sight, that the information which might be included in an encyclopaedia or in periodicals published by GATT would be such as to add any very new elements to the general documentation already available to French exporters.

"The 'Centre National du Commerce Extérieur' (National Centre for Foreign Trade), which is a para-administrative body coming under the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, is in fact responsible in France, in cooperation with the foreign network available to it, for assembling inter alia the various types of information referred to by the Brazilian proposal.

"The overseas departments have access to this documentation as do the independent States in the French franc area.

"It is nevertheless quite possible that, in an appropriate form, the documentation which would be assembled under the proposal might be of interest to countries other than ours. It is understood that if the overall response were of a positive nature, France would not fail to contribute for its part towards furnishing the information requested."
Rhodesia and Nyasaland

"While the Federation is in sympathy with the idea behind the proposal, we would naturally wish to have fuller details of exactly how it is envisaged that the Trade Information Centre would operate, how it would obtain its data, its size and structure and its cost, before we could agree to participate.

"It seems to us that to be of real value to us in our efforts to promote exports the Centre should be in a position to supply accurate and up-to-date information not only of the type listed in the questionnaire much of which is already available to us through other services, but also provide on request information on the potentials in a specific market for a particular product. It is difficult however, to envisage how the proposed Centre would be able to provide this type of service which is normally provided to governments by their own commercial representatives on a confidential basis."

United Arab Republic

"In answer to the proposal put forward by the Brazilian delegate and discussed by the GATT Committee III has been received by the United Arab Republic with interest and appreciation.

"Indeed such a Centre, if established, would greatly contribute to the realization of the GATT objectives in promoting trade exchange among members of the GATT, in particular, and in the whole world in general.

"We wish, however, to draw attention to the fact that this Centre should only be provided with information which is purely trade information in the strict sense of the word, such as data concerning customs tariffs, export and import regulations and existing trade institutions in the countries of the GATT, etc.

"We firmly believe that the GATT should seek by all possible means to collect, assimilate and collate such information and data and circulate them among the member States, whether this be through the secretariat of the GATT, or through the proposed Information Centre ...."

United Kingdom

"We consider it unlikely that United Kingdom exporters would want to make demands on the services proposed for the Centre, in view of the very comprehensive information about world markets which is made available to them by the Export Services Branch of the Board of Trade .... the headings listed .... correspond generally with the spread of the United Kingdom's own export information services."
United States

"The types of information covered ... are in most cases already available to the United States exporters.

"The United States Government considers that the Brazilian proposal merits careful study and hopes that the less-developed countries' answers to the questionnaire will provide a better picture of the extent and specific nature of the need for fuller information as an aid to their trade promotion. We will, of course, be glad to participate in every practical way in further examination of such needs, including the Brazilian and any other proposals to remedy deficiencies in this field."

II. Geographic Coverage

In reply to questions put by the secretariat as to the desirable geographic coverage of the proposed centre's work, the Government of Brazil has indicated that the markets in which Brazilian exporters are interested are Western Europe, United States, Latin America, Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa. The Government of Japan states that the Japanese exporters are interested in marketing their products in all areas of the world. The Government of Rhodesia and Nyasaland has indicated that the geographical coverage for each individual topic would vary according to the commodity exported. In general the primary and semi-processed products of the Federation find their markets in industrialized countries of Europe, North America and Japan whilst exports and manufactured products were in the main made to neighbouring countries in Africa.

III. Likely Demand for the Proposed Publications

As regards the likely demand for the different publications envisaged for publication by the proposed "Centre", the Government of Brazil considers that it would take fifty copies itself of the "Encyclopaedia", the supplementary booklet and the monthly magazine. Trade associations in Brazil would, it is estimated, take sixty copies of the three publications.

The Japanese Government has estimated that the combined demand in Japan for the publications of the "Centre" would amount to six copies.

The Government of Rhodesia and Nyasaland considers that demand is unlikely to exceed eight copies of the Encyclopaedia and supplementary booklet and twelve copies of the monthly magazine.
IV. Means of Providing Information

The secretariat has sought the views of certain governments as to the most suitable way in which information on the various topics should be provided by the proposed Centre (in the "Encyclopaedia", in supplementary booklets, in monthly journals or through correspondence facilities). A few contracting parties have given their views and their communications on this subject are on file and will be circulated, together with any further communications that may be received, if desired by the Committee.