GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

DECISION TO HOLD

1950 TARIFF NEGOTIATIONS

A decision has been taken on the basis of replies by the majority of the Contracting Parties to the General Agreement to hold a third series of tariff negotiations.

At the close of the Third Session of the Contracting Parties at Annecy a working party was appointed to study the possibility of arranging for a third series of tariff negotiations, following the first series held at Geneva in 1947 and the second at Annecy in 1949. The working party held several meetings in Geneva and convened again in London. A memorandum outlining the purpose and scope of the proposed third series of negotiations was sent to the Contracting Parties, and a majority have now replied as being in favour of holding negotiations. Included among the Contracting Parties which have so far expressed agreement to hold the negotiations are: Australia, Belgium, Burma, Canada, Czechoslovakia, France, Lebanon, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Southern Rhodesia, United Kingdom, United States.

Arrangements will now be made to begin negotiations on 28 September 1950. The place for the negotiations will be decided at the Fourth Session of the Contracting Parties to be held at Geneva in February 1950.

The 1950 negotiations will have a twofold significance. First, there will be the opportunity for additional countries to undertake negotiations with a view to adhering to the General Agreement. Enquiries have been sent to 28 governments which did not take part in either the first or second series. A further announcement will be made later this month regarding the countries which have expressed interest and which will be formally invited to participate. In view of the fact that the scope of the General Agreement is already worldwide, comprising the great majority of significant trading countries, it is not to be expected that the countries undertaking negotiations in 1950 for the first time will constitute a large segment of world trade.

Secondly, and of considerable importance, the 1950 tariff negotiations will provide an opportunity for Contracting Parties (including those which accede as a result of the Annecy negotiations) to negotiate among themselves for new or additional reciprocal tariff concessions. Thus, for example, tariff
negotiations could be undertaken between the United States and the United Kingdom or, for example, between Australia and Benelux, should the respective governments so decide. It is clear, therefore, that the 1950 negotiations may be on a very considerable scale.