Third Session of the Contracting Parties

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE SECOND MEETING

Held at Hotel Verdun, Annecy, on
Saturday, 9 April, 1949, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Hon. L. D. WILGRISS (Canada)

Subjects discussed:

1. Arrangements for the Conduct of the Tariff Negotiations

2. Order of Business of the Session.

1. Arrangements for the Conduct of the Tariff Negotiations

The CHAIRMAN announced that the tariff negotiations would be formally open on 11 April. The Heads of Delegations would meet that same afternoon mainly for the purpose of establishing a Committee on Tariff Negotiations and a Tariff Negotiations Working Party to act as a steering committee. Following the procedure adopted at the negotiations in Geneva in 1947 the Working Party would interview representatives of the participating governments, to arrange initial meetings for the opening of the negotiations which would begin with the exchange of offers.

The maximum number of negotiations was 275 and information so far received indicated that there would be at least 175 negotiations, in 90 cases both countries concerned had made requests, in 66 cases request lists had been presented by one party without definite reply from the other and in 16 cases request lists had been presented by one party and the other had indicated that it had no intention to negotiate.
Among the questions to be discussed by the Negotiations Committee, the instrument of accession would be of chief interest; the Secretariat had prepared a draft protocol and resolution and he suggested that it might be desirable to appoint a working party to examine these drafts.

Mr. HERRERA-ARANGO (Cuba) wished to know whether to engage in an exchange of lists would prejudice the right of a country to withhold the application of the Agreement under Article XXXV. The CHAIRMAN thought that this question should be studied in connection with the protocol of accession.

Mr. JOHNSEN (New Zealand) said he would like to have an indication from the Chair as to the position of the existing schedules.

The CHAIRMAN replied that the existing schedules would be retained and would not be affected except for those items on which negotiations resulted in modifications.

Mr. HEWITT (Australia) thought that the draft protocol, since it embodied many suggestions involving matters of substance, should be examined closely and discussed at length before it was referred to a sub-committee. As regards Australia it was especially inconvenient for his Government to partake in tariff negotiations at this time; the difficulties lay both in the signing of any such document at this conjuncture and in implementing its contents. It was impossible for his Government to present such a document to the legislature or to incorporate modifications in its tariffs this year. In view of these difficulties he would wish to see the Protocol drafted in such a way as to enable his Government to withhold the results of the negotiations from publication until a later date.
With the approval of the meeting the CHAIRMAN nominated Australia, any one of the Benelux countries, Cuba, France, Pakistan, United Kingdom and United States as members of a Working Party on Accession under the chairmanship of Mr. R.J. SHACKLE (United Kingdom) to consider and make recommendations for the incorporation of the results of the tariff negotiations in the General Agreement.

2. Order of Business of the Session

The CHAIRMAN stated that for practical reasons Item 4, dealing with import restrictions imposed by the Union of South Africa would have to be taken up at an early date; secondly, Item 7 dealing with the protective measures notified under Article XVIII, owing to the complicated nature of the questions involved, would require prolonged examination and therefore should be given preliminary consideration as early as possible. After that, Item 5 dealing with the status of the Agreement and the Protocols should be discussed and the other items on the agenda would be taken up in whatever order was determined later.

Mr. HEWITT (Australia) thought that Items 18 and 19 - arrangements for a third session of tariff negotiations and for the fourth session of the Contracting Parties - were closely connected with Item 3 and he would suggest that these be considered together with that item.

Mr. WILLOUGHBY (United States) emphasized the necessity for an early conclusion of the work on the items on the South African import restrictions and the Special Exchange Agreements.

In response to a question asked by Mr. AUGENTHALER (Czechoslovakia) the CHAIRMAN announced that among the 13 countries which had showed interest in tariff negotiations, El Salvador and Peru had notified that they would not engage in actual negotiations.
Mr. HOLMES (United Kingdom) thought that in view of the heavy working schedule of the session, the Easter Holidays should be made as short as possible. After some discussion it was decided by successive voting that work should be suspended on Friday, and Saturday, April 15th and 16th.

The meeting adjourned at 12.25 p.m.