1949 Tariff Negotiations

HEADS OF DELEGATIONS

Summary Record of the First Meeting held at
Hotel Verdun, Annecy, April 11th, 1949, at 3 p.m.

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

The CHAIRMAN extended a welcome on behalf of the Contracting Parties to the Governments which had expressed a desire to accede to the General Agreement. He expressed satisfaction that, since the last meeting of the Contracting Parties, the Government of Chile had decided to apply the General Agreement and he welcomed the representatives, Mr. Muller and Mr. Garcia Oldini. He expressed the wish that no distinction should be made in these meetings between Contracting Parties and acceding Governments, the purpose of the meetings of Heads of Delegations being to consider the procedure for the conduct of the forthcoming tariff negotiations.

The CHAIRMAN proposed that the negotiations should proceed on the lines of those held at Geneva in 1947, and he suggested the following 3 points for consideration by the meeting:

1) The conduct of tariff negotiations;
2) The establishment of a Tariff Negotiations Committee; and
3) The establishment of a Tariff Negotiations Working Party to act as a steering committee.

The Conduct of the Negotiations

The CHAIRMAN recalled the Geneva procedure and asked that the multilateral character of the negotiations be held prominently in mind; the bilateral negotiations being only a procedural step towards the final multilateral agreement. 127 bilateral negotiations had been held at Geneva, and at Annecy there would probably be between 150 and 200.
The CHAIRMAN explained that negotiations began when two teams met and exchanged lists of offers in response to the request which each had previously received. The Tariff Negotiations Working Party would arrange the timetable for negotiations, but negotiating teams could arrange times between themselves and inform the Secretariat.

2. The Establishment of the Tariff Negotiations Committee

The CHAIRMAN proposed the establishment of a Committee of the whole, composed of the 34 delegations, with the following terms of reference:

a) To receive reports of the Trade Negotiations Working Party;

b) To consider the incorporation of the results of the negotiations in the General Agreement; and

c) Any other matters arising out of the conduct of the negotiations.

The proposal was approved, and the CHAIRMAN then proposed that the first meeting of the Committee should take place when the Working Party had submitted a report; the first item of business for the Committee would be the election of a Chairman.

3. The Establishment of the Tariff Negotiations Working Party

The CHAIRMAN proposed the appointment of a Tariff Negotiations Working Party to act as a steering Committee for the negotiations; the Working Party would consult with delegations as to the opening and conduct of their negotiations and would be concerned generally with the mechanism of the negotiations. He suggested that the Working Party should be composed as follows:

The Chairman of the Contracting Parties as Chairman, and representatives of France, United Kingdom and United States as Contracting Parties and Italy, Sweden and Uruguay as acceding governments.

The Chairman's proposal was approved.

The CHAIRMAN asked each delegation to send a statement to the Secretariat of the negotiations which they were prepared to commence in the course of that week and those which they were prepared to commence the following week.
Replying to Mr. HEWITT (Australia) the CHAIRMAN expressed the view that if a government received a request for concessions from another government it should agree to a scheduled meeting even though the volume of its export trade to that country did not appear to provide scope for adequate concessions in return; informal discussions might take place, but he thought a government which had received a request should agree to a scheduled meeting.

Mr. DESAI (India) asked whether it might be advisable to set aside a few days in the course of which acceding Governments could put forward general statements on the commercial policy on which their requests had been based. The CHAIRMAN replied that this information would be brought out in due course when the meetings were arranged, and it would be inadvisable to delay the commencement of negotiations.

Mr. ARANGO (Cuba), in connection with the point raised by Mr. Hewitt, asked whether a meeting scheduled for consultations would imply entering into negotiations, and the CHAIRMAN replied that if one of the countries found no grounds for negotiations it could not be held that negotiations had taken place.

U. MYA SEIN (Burma) said that some requests had been made on his country, but he could only forward those to his Government and await instructions. The CHAIRMAN recommended that the Burmese delegation should ask for instructions to be sent to them urgently.

Mr. HASNIE (Pakistan) said that his country was an exporter of raw materials which were in such great demand that it was not thought necessary to ask for concessions; requests for concessions had however been addressed to Pakistan by other countries. In view of his instructions that he should do his best to meet the requests made upon his Government, he asked whether it would be possible for the Contracting Parties to put it on record that, if concessions were granted by Pakistan as a friendly gesture, they would be considered as advance-concessions against which his Government would at some later stage request compensation. The CHAIRMAN thought that the Working Party
would be glad to give its attention to this question.

Mr. COOMARASWAMY (Ceylon) pointed out that his Delegation was in a different position from that of other Contracting Parties in that in accordance with arrangements made during the Second Session they had to re-negotiate with Contracting Parties as well as to negotiate with acceding governments; he asked whether the re-negotiations would be scheduled by the Working Party or would be arranged by his delegation. The CHAIRMAN proposed that this question should be studied by the Tariff Negotiations Working Party which would report to the Committee.

The meeting adjourned at 4.10 p.m.