GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

TARIFF NEGOTIATIONS
Torquay

Summary Record of the Eighth Meeting of the Tariff Negotiations Committee

held at the Marine Spa on Thursday, 1 March 1951, at 4.00 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. C.O. GISLE (Sweden)


1. Report on the Completion of Negotiations

The CHAIRMAN summarized the discussion of the preceding meeting of the Tariff Negotiations Working Party regarding a date for the completion of negotiations. The Working Party recommended that a firm date should not be fixed at the present time and that the position should be reviewed again on March 15 to see whether the negotiations not then completed were important enough and sufficiently promising to warrant a further extension of time for their completion.

Dr. Van BLANKENSTEIN (Netherlands) thought it regrettable that no decision could be taken now. If postponement of a decision meant that the final date itself were to be indefinitely prolonged, serious harm would be done to the results of the negotiations. The Conference should certainly not continue indefinitely, as after a certain period the value of the results would diminish.

Mr. MCKINNON (Canada) considered the tone of the Working Party's recommendations pessimistic. He thought that if there were any feeling that the time factor was of no importance, this would have a very adverse effect on the conference. He, therefore, strongly supported firm adherence to whatever date might be fixed on the 15 March. Furthermore, if it then appeared that the 31st rather than the 22nd of March was a more realistic date for the end of the negotiations, he hoped that there would be no adjournment over Easter, except possibly for Good Friday, as otherwise it would almost certainly be impossible to finish by the end of the month.

The Committee approved the Working Party's recommendation.

2. Amendment to Article XXVIII

The CHAIRMAN explained that at the Fifth Session the contracting parties had authorized the Tariff Negotiations Committee to reconsider the advisability of incorporating in the Torquay Protocol the amendment of Article XXVIII of the Agreement extending the assured life of the existing schedules until 1 January 1954, and to remove paragraph 6 of the Torquay Protocol should this appear desirable, and to prepare for signature the Protocol to amend Article XXVIII, which was drawn up at the Fourth Session. Certain delegations had expressed doubts on the advisability of having only one protocol.
Mr. SVEINBJÖRNSSON (Denmark) said that the problem had been raised by the Danish Delegation but that his delegation was now prepared to accept a single protocol.

Mr. DI NOLA (Italy) said that the Italian Delegation had also been in favour of two protocols. The reason had been a formal one to avoid possible consequences of some importance, and the suggestion had been made in the interest of better results. However, if the sense of the meeting was in favour of a single protocol his delegation would not oppose it.

Dr. Van BLANKENSTEIN (Netherlands) said that his delegation had expressed the same objection as the Danish Delegation but would no longer press for two protocols. This decision did not imply, however, that the Netherlands Delegation had dropped the reservation made at the Fourth Session on the subject. The decision his government would have to take at the end of the Torquay Conference would be whether to sign all the instruments drawn up or none.

Mr. STENSTROM (Sweden) said that the Swedish Delegation was also ready to accept a single protocol. He wished to add, however, that this decision did not mean they were wholly satisfied with the results obtained at the Conference and particularly with the manner of application of the rule that the binding of low tariff rates was equivalent to lowering high rates.

The CHAIRMAN concluded that the Committee was in agreement to leave the documents to embody the results of the Torquay negotiations as they stood at present (CATT/CP.5/46).

This was approved.

3. Publicity for the Results of the Negotiations

Mr. CORSE (United States) referred to the question of publishing the results of the negotiations at the close of the Conference. As drafted, the protocol provided the possibility that some concessions could come into effect 30 days after it was opened for signature. The United States Government tried to give at least 30 days' notice of any changes in tariffs and his delegation would like to have the agreement of the Committee that the schedule of a government which signs the protocol at the close of the Conference would not enter into force until thirty days after the results of the Conference had been made public; this was a matter that would perhaps best be studied by the Tariff Negotiations Working Party.

The CHAIRMAN said that the Tariff Negotiations Working Party would be instructed to consider Mr. Corse's suggestion and report to the Committee. This was agreed.

The meeting adjourned at 4.30 p.m.