Reasons for the length of session

It is fitting that we should pause to consider why it has taken us so long - over four months - to get through the agenda of this Third Session. This is important because if our subsequent regular sessions turn out to be of long duration, this will inevitably affect the quality of the representation, that governments send to these meetings of the Contracting Parties.

No doubt, one important factor which has made our deliberations longer than might otherwise have been the case has been the fact that this session has co-incided with the tariff negotiations. The fact that delegations have had to be in Annecy for the duration of the tariff negotiations has led to a lack of incentive to deal with items on the agenda as expeditiously as possible.

Another, and probably the most important, factor affecting the duration of this particular session has been the complicated nature of some of the problems with which we have had to deal. As I stated in my remarks at the opening of this session, our first two sessions were largely of an organizational character. We were then concerned mostly with the adapting the provisions of the general agreement to the changes incorporated in the Havana Charter as compared with the Geneva draft of the Charter, on which the original General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade had been based. At this session we have had to give practical application to the provisions of the General Agreement, including some of the most complicated parts of the Havana Charter.

Notably, we have had, for the first time, to undertake consultations concerning import restrictions imposed in accordance with Article XII. We have also had to give more thorough examination to measures notified under Article XVIII. Neither of these two complicated sets of provisions in the Havana Charter was well adapted to an instrument receiving only provisional application, such as is the present position of the General Agreement. They were drafted as part of the Havana Charter and it was envisaged that they would be applied by the International Trade Organization serviced by a large and expert secretariat.
I am hopeful that in no future session will it be necessary to devote such a large number of meetings to consideration of the problems to which the balance and payments and economic development provisions of the agreement give rise.

Procedures between Sessions

We have had to devise procedures for inter-sessional machinery in relation to both of these two sets of provisions of the General Agreement. I wish now to express the hope that it may be necessary only on rare occasions to resort to this inter-sessional procedure. We must take into account how hard pressed all governments are with respect to trained personnel, and hence how reluctant they will be to send representatives to meetings of the Contracting Parties at more frequent intervals than every five or six months.

Balance of Payments Problems: Future Outlook

While the economic development provisions of the general Agreement have taken up more time at this Session than the balance of payments provisions, I can foresee that in the future it is the balance of payments provisions that are likely to be the most time-consuming of all the provisions of the General Agreement. We have already had an indication that it will be necessary for the Contracting Parties soon to consult with the Government of the United Kingdom regarding the substantial intensification of import restrictions. But it is not only the government of the United Kingdom that is likely to be in this position. We can foresee that similar circumstances may soon arise with respect to many other of the Contracting Parties. In fact, I do not think I am being too pessimistic when I predict that before long nearly half the Contracting Parties will be substantially intensifying import restrictions and therefore will have to be invited to consult with the Contracting Parties acting jointly within 30 days, in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 4 (b) of Article XII.

Needless to say, in making these remarks I am not making any suggestion or proposal for the consideration of the Contracting Parties but merely suggesting some of the considerations which representatives of the Contracting Parties should bear in mind when, in the interval between this session and the next, questions relating to the balance of payments provisions of the General Agreement arise for the consideration of their governments.

Contracting Parties: A unique gathering

There has been another aspect of our deliberations which has impressed itself upon me rather forcibly from time to time. I have had the impression that delegates have not always kept in mind the broader general interests of the General Agreement impressing the case of their particular countries. We understand, and naturally respect, the attitude of those delegates who defend both ably and forcibly the interests of their countries but we would hope that at all times delegates will not lose sight of the main objective of the General Agreement. The Contracting Parties are not an organization, but they do represent the only international gathering which provides a forum for the discussion of questions pertaining to the international exchange of goods. A unique opportunity
is thereby provided, for the leading trading countries of the world to meet together and cooperate in a spirit of good will in furthering the objectives which will lead to an expansion of world trade. In defending any measures which operate contrary to the objectives of the General Agreement, delegates should therefore bear in mind that there is a limit beyond which they should not press the particular point of view of their own country if that point of view is at variance with the general objectives or the provisions of the General Agreement.

Tributes and thanks

I cannot conclude without paying my tribute once more to those who have borne the main brunt of our lengthy deliberations over the past four months. I am referring, of course, to the Chairmen of the Working Parties, to each and every one of whom we owe a great debt of gratitude for the magnificent contributions they made to the success of our labours. Finally, it is my great pleasure once more to go on record in paying an unqualified tribute to the outstanding work of Mr. Wyndham White, the Executive Secretary, and Mr. Royer, the Associate Executive Secretary. To both of them the Contracting Parties owe much for the manner in which they have assisted and, indeed, contributed to the success of our work. To Mr. Wyndham White in particular I want to say this; you have gathered together a small but faithful staff; most important of all, you have instilled into them an esprit de corps which I do not think you will find equalled in the secretariat of any other international organization. It has been electrifying for me to see how, under the difficult conditions under which they have had to work in Annecy, all the members of the secretariat have so cheerfully discharged their duties. I am therefore speaking for all representatives of the Contracting Parties when I convey to you and to all members of the secretariat our most heartfelt thanks for what they have done to assist us under most trying circumstances.

I should like all of those interpreters who have participated in our gatherings to hear a special expression of gratitude for the efficient manner in which they have carried out their most trying duties of interpreting our discussions. By this they will realise that the difficulties under which they work are fully appreciated by the representatives of the Contracting Parties, who can only admire the high standard of efficiency they have so consistently maintained.

In conclusion, I should again like to signify our appreciation and gratitude to the Government of France, to the authorities of the Department of Haute Savoie and particularly those of the town of Annecy, for all they have done to make our stay here so congenial and pleasant. I am sure that none of us will ever forget the pleasant contacts we have made with the good people of Annecy and the attractions of this delightfully-situated town.