THE FORTHCOMING ANNECY TRADE MEETINGS

Advance Background Information
Second Edition

The trade meetings scheduled to open officially on April 11 at Annecy, France, will involve a larger potential number of tariff negotiations than has ever been held simultaneously in the history of world trade.

Thirty-six governments have stated their intention of participating. These may be divided into two groups:

(a) The 23 countries which comprise the Contracting Parties to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. These countries are:

- Australia
- Belgium
- Brazil
- Burma
- Canada
- Ceylon
- Chile
- China
- Colombia
- Denmark
- Dominican Republic
- El Salvador
- Finland
- Greece
- Haiti
- Italy
- Uruguay
- Liberia
- Nicaragua
- Sweden

The above 23 countries completed among themselves 123 bilateral sets of negotiations during 1947 at Geneva. The resulting tariff concessions were embodied in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). All the 23 countries have since put GATT into operation within the limits of their existing legislation.

(b) The 13 so called "acceding" countries which have stated their intention to negotiate with a view to acceding to the GATT. These countries are:

- Argentina
- Austria
- Belgium-Luxembourg
- China (People's Republic)
- Congo (Brazzaville)
- Czechoslovakia
- Denmark
- Dominican Republic
- El Salvador
- Finland
- Greece
- Guatemala
- Iceland
Procedure

Each of the 23 countries forming the Contracting Parties can negotiate with each of the 13 Acceding countries. Each of the Acceding countries can negotiate with each other.

The maximum number of negotiations would therefore be:

between the Contracting Parties and the Acceding countries ... 260
among the Acceding countries ... 78

338

Note: for the purpose of negotiation, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg act together as the Benelux group; Lebanon and Syria also form a single unit.

It is not expected that the 23 Contracting Parties will renegotiate among themselves except perhaps to complete one or two negotiations left unfinished at the 1947 Geneva meeting.

Each bilateral negotiation (i.e., between two countries) can be regarded as a bargaining operation, no country being expected to give tariff concessions without receiving equivalent concessions in return. The concessions may include complete elimination of tariff duties and preferences, reductions of duties and preferences, the "binding" or freezing of duties at existing levels, and the "binding" of duty-free treatment.

A special feature of these negotiations is that, being held simultaneously, each country can take advantage not only of the concessions which it secures in its own bilateral negotiations, but also of all the parallel negotiations between the other participating countries. This is secured through the "most-favoured-nation-treatment" clause which is laid down in the GATT. It is this factor that gives the negotiations their unique "multilateral" character.

The actual negotiations are conducted in secrecy and, except for general progress reports, the discussions are not covered by U.N. press releases.
Size and Duration of Meeting

Between 500 and 600 delegates and assistants will participate, and will require 150 offices. This is the reason - lack of adequate accommodation - why the meeting could not be held in the Palais des Nations, Geneva. With the co-operation of the French authorities, virtually the whole town of Annecy will be occupied.

The trade negotiations are likely to require at least three months.

The Annecy trade meetings are organized and staffed by the secretariat of the ITO Interim Commission under Eric Wyndham White, Executive Secretary.

Third Session of the Contracting Parties

The 23 Contracting Parties to GATT will hold their 3rd Session, under Chairman Ambassador Dana Wilgress (Canada), at Annecy during the period of the negotiations. They are expected to begin work on or about April 12 and to continue for four or five weeks. The meetings of the Contracting Parties are expected to be held in private, as in the past, press communiqués being authorized by the Chairman.

Opening Ceremonies

The opening ceremonies are scheduled for the morning of Monday, April 11.

However, an administrative meeting of the Contracting Parties has been called, at Annecy, on Friday, April 8.

Press Office

Meetings of the Contracting Parties will normally take place in the Hotel Verdun.

A press work room and press conference room, with telephones and typewriters, will be available in the Mairie, which is very near the Hotel Verdun. The Verdun will be open only to delegates and members of the secretariat.

Lists of chief delegates and of hotels to which delegations have been assigned will be made available later. The U.S. delegation will number over 80; the U.K. delegation over 60.
It is expected that arrangements for obtaining petrol coupons will be similar to those in operation at the Palais de Chaillot for the General Assembly.

Geneva correspondents are asked to obtain their accreditation cards from Miss Atkins, at the Palais, before the meeting opens. These "A" cards (pink) have been submitted to the Swiss and French frontier authorities at St. Julien, in order to facilitate rapid passage of correspondents' cars.

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