By this present paper the newly elected staff representatives for the professional category are presenting themselves to the staff and I am thanking in Mr. Hortling's name as well as in mine for the confidence shown to us. It might not be necessary to point out that the representatives will do their best in the interest of the staff.

This might also be the occasion to thank our friend Dick Ford for the efficient job he has done in the past in his quiet way and express the regret that he has decided not to put forward his candidature for the current term.

Of the long-term problems to be dealt with by the staff representatives, the most outstanding in the near future (not to mention the vital problems which would arise with the realisation of OTC) will probably be the questions relating to the adherence of the members of the secretariat to the Pension Fund. Very little can be said on this problem for the time being, but as soon as any new development becomes visible, the members of the staff will be informed.

A less urgent problem, but nevertheless a main problem, is related to the rules of the Staff Representation. In connexion with the last election various difficulties became apparent which certainly may make a review of these regulations necessary. A draft will be prepared and put forward for approval. This draft will contain clearer election provisions in case of split votes, etc. It will also provide for the possibility of expressing wishes by the request for a referendum. The draft will be distributed in a way which gives ample time for consideration and for votes on points on which divergent opinions are found to exist. It is quite clear that this procedure can only result in a draft to be presented to the Executive Secretary of GATT for approval and will not come into force before such an agreement.

Spec/16/57

English only
There is obviously also a need for an institution to express wishes in a less formal way than by the request for a referendum. Although a system providing for regular staff assemblies such as exists in the United Nations would certainly not be appropriate for our smaller staff, nevertheless the possibility should be given to staff members to express their opinion on problems of special interest in a meeting. I thought therefore that such a meeting might be convened from time to time, the first before Easter. To provide for a prepared agenda, members of the staff are invited to inform me of points they wish to bring up for discussion.

Finally, it should be mentioned in this connection that the United Nations Staff Bulletin will in future be circulated among the staff in English and French depending on the working language.

The most urgent short-term problem is related to the request put forward by the United Nations staff for increase of salaries due to increased living costs. The efforts of the United Nations staff representation, however, have not led to fruitful results as far as Geneva is concerned. Attached you will find document CPG/9/AP/2 (French only) distributed at yesterday's staff meeting which contains a summary of the changes in salaries recommended by the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly. There is no hope that this recommendation might be improved; on the contrary, it is expected that it will be adopted by the Assembly unchanged in the next few days. This decision was considered by the meeting to be disappointing in many ways. It did not lead to the requested increase; it removed the previous agreement with the United Nations staff which was based on the idea of uniform salaries for all United Nations employees (to be adapted by the cost coefficients) and replaced it by a class system depending on the place of employment and putting Geneva as the place for the "base" salary neglecting the increase of living costs at Geneva which have occurred since 1950. Under this new arrangement, however, the children's allowance for the Professional group will be increased from US $200 to $300. The staff meeting vigourously opposed the general development, which was
considered to be a discrimination against Geneva, and voted in favour of a protest resolution to be sent to New York. It is quite clear that the effect of this resolution can become evident only in connexion with next year's meeting of the Fifth Committee. The staff representative of the International Labour Office, however, indicated at the meeting that the ILO staff might take stronger action very soon in favour of a cost-of-living increase in the salaries. Such an action would be possible since the ILO staff is represented in the Governing Body in accordance with the principles of parity generally observed by that organization.

Since GATT is not directly affected by these decisions, the Executive Secretary will be approached as soon as the final decision taken by the United Nations is known.

F.K. Liebich
Staff Representative,
Professional Category.