The staff representatives were convoked by Mr. Wyndham White for a "tour d'horizon" concerning the most important pending staff problems. The following is an outline of the discussion as approved by the Executive Secretary.

Relation: Administration - Staff

Insofar as the relation with the Administration is concerned, the following general points were stressed. The staff would like to get information concerning important developments (e.g., discussions in the United Nations concerning staff problems) and to be given the chance to express their views on such developments so as to make sure that the Administration knows the point of view of the staff concerning specific problems before GATT takes action.

It was confirmed that the policy was to give the present staff preference in appointment to vacancies as against outside candidates of equal merit.

Rules and Regulations

In this field, some requests were brought forward. The main point was the division of power as between legislation and administration. Insofar as the legislative aspect is concerned, it was explained that GATT feels itself bound to follow the same principles as the United Nations. GATT applies on the whole the UN Regulations, as well as the interpretative notes to these United Nations regulations called "Rules". In this connexion it was stressed by the Executive Secretary that new United Nations regulations and rules are not automatically binding for GATT but before deciding that any new rule was not to be applied to the GATT staff the Administration would consult with the staff representatives.

The main provisions not in force for GATT concern: the permanent contract, the pension fund, the appeals board and the tribunal. So far as the appeals board and the tribunal are concerned the Executive Secretary stressed the point that he is not opposed to give, the staff access to such institutions but it might not be necessary to solve this problem as long as ICITO is temporary only. Nevertheless, it is the view of the staff representatives that the staff should have access to a satisfactory appeals machinery, since GATT - and therefore ICITO - became meanwhile de facto a permanent, and important, international organisation. The Executive Secretary said that as far as decisions are taken in exercise of a discretionary power, recognised by the regulations and rules the staff representatives would be free to raise any questions.
In the field of the administration the interpretation of the rules plays an important rôle. The interpretation given by the United Nations Administration is used as a guidance for decisions to be taken by the GATT Administration. The Executive Secretary emphasized that he would always, so far as compatible with the observance and enforcement of the regulations apply the interpretation which would be the most favourable for the staff. He emphasized that the application of this policy is not influenced by budgetary considerations.

Pension Fund

Concerning the Pension Fund, the formal situation has not changed as compared with the situation half a year ago. The attempt to solve the problem by a coordinated action of the CONTRACTING PARTIES at the United Nations General Assembly only led to a general recommendation that UN try to reach agreement with GATT after consultation with the Pensions Board. After this meeting, however, a representative of the UN Pension Board visited the Executive Secretary and was optimistic about the possibility of GATT joining the Pension Fund. A session of the Pension Fund Board will be held in Geneva in April, which will be attended by the Executive Secretary personally. This might bring about a satisfactory decision.

At the beginning of the Twelfth Session, however, it may still not be clear whether it is possible to reach agreement with the United Nations Pension Board or not and if the CONTRACTING PARTIES do not alter their view expressed at the last session, an agreement with a private company, so as to give the staff similar protection, will have to be concluded. In this connexion the wish of the staff has been expressed that in the case of a contract with a private insurance, the situation of the staff members should on the whole not be less advantageous than under the United Nations Pension Scheme, which means that additional expenses to arrive at that effect should be borne by GATT. It was further stressed that GATT often needs staff with a great deal of specialized experience; these staff members therefore enter at a higher age, a situation which prevents them from enjoying the full pension. For such cases increased voluntary payments should be made possible. The staff representatives hope to be given an opportunity to follow closely the discussion with the various insurance institutions, if it is not possible to participate in such negotiations.

ISAR

The idea was already expressed in Communication No 1/1957 to review the provisions dealing with the obligations and rights of the staff. The necessity for having workable rules has been recognised as necessary. Since however, the ICITTO is an interim organisation, it is suggested to call these provisions "Interim Staff Association Rules" (ISAR).

M. Wilson

P. K. Liebich