Notes by GATT on Public Information Programme 1958

1. The main news items about GATT will probably arise from the business conducted at the annual Session of the Contracting Parties to the General Agreement, which opens at Geneva on 16 October 1958. However, the various activities of GATT between Sessions, such as meetings of the Intersessional Committee, and the tariff negotiations with Brazil and with Switzerland respectively, attract a good deal of interest in the press.

There is a marked tendency for information about the GATT to be spread more evenly through the year and, in general, to be more widely reported and more thoughtfully interpreted. This is partly due to the role of GATT vis-à-vis the European Economic Community (which includes a customs union). The Rome Treaty establishing the EEC came into force on 1 January 1958 and it seems probable that the GATT will be almost continuously involved in the evolution of the European Common Market project, particularly during the so-called "transitional period" of 15 years. The GATT would have a similar task to fulfil if the European Free Trade Area is set up.

2. In August 1958 the GATT secretariat will publish "International Trade 1957". Judging by past experience this survey of world trade trends will attract extensive comments in the press.

3. In the field of international trade relations an important development will be the renewal of the United States trade legislation, namely the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act, which will expire in June 1958. It is most unlikely, however, that the United States Congress will this year approve United States participation in the Organization for Trade Cooperation (OTC) which is designed to put GATT on a permanent organizational basis. The OTC cannot come into operation without United States participation.