ORGANIZATION OF WORK IN THE CONSULTATIONS COMMITTEE

Suggestions by the Executive Secretary

1. In the note circulated in W.13/14, it was proposed that a Consultations Committee be set up at the present Session to conduct the consultations in 1959. That note did not go into the details as regards how the meetings of the Committee should be conducted. Having had an opportunity of discussing the matter with certain delegations, the Executive Secretary wishes to propose the following procedures designed to contribute to a more effective functioning of the Committee.

2. In view of the large number of consultations to be held, it is inevitable that the Committee will have to deal with several countries each time it meets (it was suggested it meets three times in 1959). Under these conditions it is difficult to expect that each member of the Committee could familiarize himself with the problems of all the countries with which consultations were being held. On the other hand, since these consultations will be devoted to balance-of-payments restrictions in all their aspects, and not confined to the discriminatory aspect, as has often been the case in the past, the proceedings should be such as to ensure a broad interest and participation in the discussions.

3. To this end it is proposed that when the Consultations Committee convenes to conduct a group of consultations, it should appoint among its members several sub-committees for the purpose of examining the documentation and deciding on the questions and issues that appear to be most useful to discuss in each consultation, bearing in mind the interests of the contracting parties in general.

4. Each sub-committee would consist of perhaps four members and would deal with the consultation with one country. Each member of the Consultations Committee would have the opportunity of serving on at least one sub-committee.

5. The preliminary process would occupy a short period at the beginning of each meeting of the Consultations Committee. Meetings of the sub-committees would normally be held on an informal basis. The consultations would begin with the whole Consultations Committee as and when one or more of the sub-committees completed their work.

6. Although the consultations would naturally focus on the questions formulated by the sub-committees, each member of the Consultations Committee would, as at present, be free to put questions or raise issues not covered by the suggestions of the competent sub-committee.
7. Although the sub-committees could be designated at the beginning of each meeting of the Consultations Committee, there would be an advantage in designating them, as far as possible, immediately after the appointment of the Consultations Committee at the last session of the CONTRACTING PARTIES in the preceding year. The Consultations Committee for the consultations to be held in 1959 should be convened for this purpose as soon as it is appointed at the end of the present session. The early designation of the sub-committees would enable more thorough study of particular country situations by their members.

8. If this plan of operation is adopted for 1959 it should be regarded as experimental, and to be modified or adapted in the light of experience.