GENERAL AGREEMENT ON
TARIFFS AND TRADE

ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL QUESTIONS

Commercial Policy Training Courses:
Problems Facing the GATT Training Programme

INTRODUCTION

1. The GATT Commercial Policy Courses, which began in 1955, are organized by the GATT secretariat and take place in Geneva twice a year: between February and June, and August and December. Following a decision by the 1982 Ministerial Meeting, the number of fellowships for each course was increased from twenty to twenty-four. The courses have been open in principle to officials from all developing countries, whether or not members of GATT, who have, or may in the future have, responsibilities in the formulation and conduct of foreign trade policy in their countries. Up to the end of 1985, the GATT Commercial Policy Courses were attended by a total of 954 officials from 112 countries and 10 regional organizations. The principal aim of courses has been to help participants achieve a deeper understanding of trade policy matters, a full and up-to-date knowledge of the General Agreement and its related instruments, and of the work undertaken by GATT and other international bodies in the field of trade policy which will be helpful to them in work in their own administrations and promote a more effective participation of their countries in GATT activities. The courses include lectures, seminars, group discussions, special subject studies and a simulated trade negotiation. Towards the end of the course, the participants go on a two-week study tour abroad to gain first-hand knowledge of the trade policy of the countries concerned and to visit industrial and commercial centres. A short study tour in Switzerland is also part of the programme. The Training Division, responsible for the courses, comprises a Director, two to three professionals, an administrative assistant and two temporary secretaries.

2. Various questions relating to the GATT Training Programme were discussed during the October 1984 Meeting of the Committee on Budget, Finance and Administration (L/5699, paragraphs 44-51), and in the Council in November 1984 (C/M/183, pages 82-89). Reference was also made to the subject in the Council's report to the 40th Session of the Contracting Parties in November 1984 (L/5734, pages 80, 81). The Director-General reported at the November 1985 Meeting of the Council on informal consultations he has been carrying out with interested delegations on the future of the Training Programme (C/M/194, page 33). The present note outlines the major problems involved.
I. Increasing Demand

3. The demand for GATT fellowships has been growing at a rapid pace. From 1961 to 1985 the overall demand has increased steadily from a ratio of 1:1 (1 candidature for 1 fellowship) to a ratio of approximately 4:1. With the prospect of new multilateral negotiations this situation is likely to continue. This growing demand has not been matched by the number of fellowships (48) offered each year. The secretariat has always tried to be fair in its selection of participants. But the present circumstances are such that it finds itself more and more in the delicate situation of having to make difficult choices among equally deserving candidates from countries in need of the training offered by the GATT courses. It is evident, however, that a further increase in the number of fellowships would entail increased expenditure, e.g. a larger lecture room, more office space and staff.

II. Three Official Languages

4. The decision was taken at the 1982 Ministerial Meeting that, in addition to English and French, the Commercial Policy Courses should be held regularly in the Spanish language. A first course in the Spanish language was held in 1984 and another is now taking place.

5. Spanish courses are more costly than the courses in English and French. The main reason, apart from somewhat higher travel costs, is that despite efforts within the secretariat (including crash courses for members of the Training Division), lecturers are as yet unable to handle the courses in Spanish with the same facility as the courses in English and French. Interpreters are therefore necessary to enable certain lecturers to communicate with Spanish-speaking participants.

III. Accommodation

6. In the last two or three years the GATT Training Programme has been seriously affected by the accommodation problem which now exists in Geneva. It has become extremely difficult for trainees to obtain reasonably priced hotel rooms. Many hotels are also unable or unwilling to make long-term bookings. Constant changing of hotels inevitably affects the ability of participants to concentrate on their studies. Furnished studios are also not always available at reasonable prices. An important complication has been the tendency on the part of some Geneva landlords to give preference to certain nationalities in the renting of accommodation.

7. The Director-General has repeatedly called on the permanent missions in Geneva to assist their nationals participating in the GATT courses in finding suitable accommodation. Unfortunately, not all missions have responded. Furthermore, many trainees do not have permanent missions in Geneva.
8. A long-term solution to the accommodation problem should be sought. One possibility would be for the GATT to obtain, through the FIPOI or elsewhere, a building where the trainees could be housed. This solution would have the advantage of providing the same type of accommodation for all concerned, and at the same time avoid past problems encountered with landlords - objection to noise, for example. In addition a GATT trainee building could be adapted to the needs of the Training Programme: individual studios, common room for group study, etc. It should perhaps be noted that the rents paid by the trainees under the present system represent a net cost to the GATT. If there were a GATT building for the trainees, per diem allowances could be reduced.

IV. Study Tours

9. A decision taken at the Budget Committee and endorsed by the GATT Council in November 1984 stipulated that, as from 1985, contracting parties that wish to invite GATT participants to visit their countries will have to meet certain costs involved (L/5699, page 13). Previously, there was no shortage of governments wishing to invite GATT trainees to visit their countries. Since the new arrangements were adopted, no government has offered to host study tours and the secretariat has been put in the awkward position of asking them to do so. The resulting uncertainty has made the planning and organization of study tours very difficult.

V. Office Space

10. The trainees are allocated a small number of offices, some of which are also used for certain collective training exercises. Shortage of office space for other divisions in the secretariat is obliging the secretariat progressively to deprive trainees of some of these offices. A situation where both living and working conditions are difficult is not conducive to morale and to a good working atmosphere. An improvement in the living accommodation situation would to some extent alleviate the office space problem.