

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

RESTRICTED
LIMITED B
GATT/CP.5/11,
25 October 1950
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

CONTRACTING PARTIES
Fifth Session

ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE CONTINUING ADMINISTRATION OF THE GENERAL AGREEMENT

Statement by the Canadian Delegation

1. The Canadian Delegation has proposed that the Contracting Parties at their Fifth Session should discuss arrangements for the continuing administration of the General Agreement. It is the view of the Canadian Delegation that the increase in the number of Contracting Parties, and the number, variety and complexity of the items proposed for inclusion in the Agenda of the Fifth Session, render imperative some consideration of the manner in which the General Agreement is to be administered in the future.
2. Up to the present the Contracting Parties have been able to dispose of their work by holding periodic sessions at intervals of every five or six months. However, at the Third Session held in Annecy, it was found necessary to make arrangements for inter-sessional procedure in relation to (a) Articles XI to XIV (GATT/CP.3/50) and (b) Article XVIII (GATT/CP.3/60). The situation has become more complicated by reason of the fact that there are now 32 Contracting Parties, and this number will soon be increased as a result of the Torquay negotiations. The Provisional Agenda for the Fifth Session shows that many complicated questions are now being proposed for the consideration of the Contracting Parties. It will be difficult to deal adequately with these questions in sessions of the Contracting Parties confined to a period of not more than six weeks.
3. The Canadian Delegation is of the view that the regular sessions of the Contracting Parties should not be prolonged beyond a period of six weeks, since this would lead to a heavy burden of representation on the part of governments. It would also preclude that representation on a high level which is so essential if the Contracting Parties are to gain the measure of respect which is due to them as the only existing inter-governmental forum for the discussion of commercial policy questions on a world-wide basis.
4. Accordingly, it is the view of the Canadian Delegation that steps should be taken at the Fifth Session to set up an Executive Committee which would conduct the work of the Contracting Parties on a continuing basis. The Executive Committee would be established at one of the regular sessions of the Contracting Parties, and would continue to function for a period of one year, provided, however, that if this period should expire during an interval between regular sessions, the Executive Committee would continue until the next succeeding session. The Executive Committee would only have such authority as may be conferred upon it by the Contracting Parties at a regular session. It would report to the Contracting Parties on its activities at each of the regular sessions of the Contracting Parties.
5. It is the view of the Canadian Delegation that an Executive Committee of twelve countries, established by the Contracting Parties on the basis of their relative importance in international trade and with due regard to the principle of equitable geographical distribution, would be the most suitable for the purpose of administering the General Agreement on a continuing basis.
6. The Canadian Delegation would propose that, if the Executive Committee is set up, the Contracting Parties at the Fifth Session should delegate to the Executive Committee the responsibilities envisaged in the reports adopted at the Third Session on inter-sessional procedure for the provisions of (a) Articles XI to XIV, and (b) Article XVIII. The Canadian Delegation would also anticipate

that the Contracting Parties would wish to refer to the Executive Committee for further consideration such questions as the Contracting Parties may not be able to consider fully at the Fifth Session. Furthermore, the Executive Committee might be authorized by the Contracting Parties to take preliminary initiative in respect of complaints which may be received between sessions of the Contracting Parties, and also in those rare cases when matters arise which cannot be left entirely unattended to until the next session of the Contracting Parties. Such preliminary initiative would take the form of investigation and the drawing up of a report recommending decisions which could be taken by a postal vote of the Contracting Parties, if such decisions cannot be deferred until the next regular session.

7. The Canadian Delegation appreciates that, if the Contracting Parties decide to set up an Executive Committee at the Fifth Session, consideration will have to be given to the most convenient place at which the Executive Committee will meet. This, in effect, will require consideration of a possible change in the headquarters of the Contracting Parties. It is clear that most governments would not wish to assign representatives to a post exclusively for the purpose of attending meetings of the Executive Committee. For this reason it would be desirable that the meetings of the Committee should be held in a centre of importance from the point of view of international trade, since it is only in such a centre that most governments would have high level representatives dealing with economic and commercial questions and who could also be assigned the task of representing their governments on the Executive Committee.

8. The Canadian Delegation suggests that the questions set forth in this statement should be discussed at the Fifth Session of the Contracting Parties with a view to the adoption of a resolution giving effect to such proposals as may be agreed upon by the Contracting Parties with a view to providing suitable arrangements for the continuing administration of the General Agreement.