

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

RESTRICTED

L/356
2 May 1955

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AUSTRALIAN IMPORT RESTRICTIONS

Consultation under Article XII:4(b)

1. In accordance with the procedures adopted by the CONTRACTING PARTIES at the Eighth Session the Government of Australia transmitted on 22 March 1955 a notification of its decision to intensify its import restrictions effective from 1 April 1955. The information supplied by the Australian Government was circulated to contracting parties in L/350 and L/350/Add.1.
2. These measures appeared prima facie to amount to a substantial intensification within the meaning of Article XII:4(b) and therefore to call for the initiation of a consultation under that provision. The Executive Secretary, by airgram (GATT/AIR/57) dated 29 March 1955, invited contracting parties to express their views on the timing of such consultation. It was suggested that in view of the recent termination of a lengthy session of the CONTRACTING PARTIES and the fact that consultations with Australia had been conducted at that Session, contracting parties might not be disposed to carry out a further consultation at once, but might prefer to postpone the matter to the next meeting of the Intersessional Committee. Specifically, contracting parties were requested to indicate:
 - (a) whether they desired that a consultation should forthwith be initiated and promptly carried out; or alternatively
 - (b) whether they would agree to waive the time limit contained in Article XII:4(b) on the understanding that the matter would be considered by the Intersessional Committee when it was first convened for other business.
3. Eighteen contracting parties have responded to this enquiry, and all but one of them indicate a preference for alternative (b). In addition, the Government of Australia has indicated that it is willing to consult under whichever alternative is generally favoured by the contracting parties. Consequently, the matter will be placed on the Agenda of the next meeting of the Intersessional Committee.

4. The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, whilst agreeing to the proposed deferment as an exception to the general rule, considers it important, however, that a definite time be set for the consultation. The German Government has proposed, therefore, that the Intersessional Committee should be convened not later than 30 June 1955 to deal with this matter if it has not been convened prior to that date for other business, and that in the event the Committee should be unable to meet then, the consultation with Australia nevertheless be initiated by that date. In a separate communication it has been suggested that the Intersessional Committee be convened on 16 June 1955, to deal with various matters which are by then likely to require consideration. The consideration with Australia will be included in the Agenda of that meeting.