

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

TWENTIETH SESSION, GENEVA, 1962

THE TWENTIETH session of the Contracting Parties to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) was held in Geneva from October 23 to November 16, 1962.¹ At this meeting, the Contracting Parties dealt with a number of broad issues, the most important of which related to the convening of a GATT ministerial meeting.

GATT Ministerial Meeting

Prior to the opening of the twentieth session, Prime Minister Diefenbaker and President Kennedy, in an exchange of letters in mid-October, agreed that it would be useful if a meeting of GATT ministers were to be held to consider how the major problems of trade could be dealt with to the mutual advantage of all.² The delegations of Canada and the United States joined in putting such a proposal before the Contracting Parties at the twentieth session.

The Contracting Parties accepted this joint initiative, and agreed that a ministerial meeting should be held in the early part of 1963 to consider a programme for effective liberalization and expansion of trade in both primary and secondary products. In this connection, full weight would be attached to the importance and urgency of negotiating solutions to the problems of trade in primary products and to the additional trade problems of less-developed countries. The GATT Council will be convened at an early date, so that it may make adequate preparation, propose an agenda, and establish the precise date for the meeting of GATT ministers.

The Prime Minister, in announcing the decision of the GATT Contracting Parties in the House of Commons on November 15, 1962, said:

Arrangements will be made for Canada to be represented at this very important meeting by the Minister of Trade and Commerce, and possibly by other ministers as well. I believe that a meeting at this time will have the most far-reaching and beneficial results throughout the free world, and will open great possibilities for expanding trade, and, in consequence, expansion in the Canadian economy.

Before the GATT ministerial meeting, a working party on tariff reductions will meet to give consideration to new techniques which might be followed in any future GATT tariff negotiations. The working party, under the chairmanship of a Canadian, Mr. R. Y. Grey of the Department of Finance, will then report to the ministerial meeting. (Mr. Grey served with the Department of External Affairs from 1956 to 1960).

¹For a report on the nineteenth session, see *External Affairs*, Volume XIV, No. 1, March 1962.

²The texts of the letters are reproduced at the end of this article.