

The other side of GATT is the procedure which has been evolved for the conduct of tariff negotiations. At Geneva in 1947 there took place a unique experiment in trade agreement negotiating technique. This has now become a well-established procedure for the conduct of a whole series of tariff negotiations between different countries in one place and at one time. It is peculiarly adapted to the requirements of the United States Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act. This Act required the United States Government to give public notice of intention to hold negotiations for a trade agreement and to give interested parties in the United States an opportunity of making their views known at public hearings. Obviously this elaborate machinery can be simplified if a whole series of negotiations with different countries are held in one place, at one time, and the results embodied in one trade agreement.

Since the negotiations at Geneva in 1947 two other sets of tariff negotiations have taken place under the auspices of GATT. One of these was held at Annecy, France, in 1949, for the purpose of admitting certain important trading countries to GATT. The other was held at Torquay, England, in the winter of 1950-51. This was not only for the purpose of admitting other trading nations but also for the purpose of permitting all of the contracting parties to negotiate once more with each other, particularly having in view the fact that the concessions negotiated at Geneva had been bound for a three year period only, that is to the end of 1950. At the end of this year the tariff concessions negotiated at Torquay are no longer bound since the three year term will again have expired. Another round of tariff negotiations similar to that which took place at Torquay must be held soon. From this you will see that the procedure which was evolved at Geneva in 1947 is likely to become a permanent feature. We may anticipate a round of multilateral tariff negotiations taking place at intervals of about every three years.

There is one respect in which GATT has an advantage over the other organizations which have been set up since the last war. This is the flexibility of its basic instrument.

Article XXIX of the General Agreement provided that if the Havana Charter for the International Trade Organization had not entered into force by a certain date, which date has already passed, the Contracting Parties would meet to agree whether the Agreement should be amended, supplemented or maintained. At the appropriate time, therefore, a meeting can be held which would lead to a thorough review and no doubt revision of certain of the provisions of the General Agreement.

The meeting envisaged in this Article may be one of the important steps for giving effect to the measures necessary for the conduct of world trade on a broad multilateral basis as envisaged in the proposals agreed upon at the Commonwealth Economic Conference held in London towards the end of last year. Enough has been said about the objectives of these proposals for us to know that they relate to the convertibility of currencies and the conduct of world trade on a broad multilateral basis. Objectives such as these can be attained in two ways. One way would be to hold an international conference or conferences of the type which took place when the charters of the Specialized Agencies were drawn up at the end of the war.