

Purpose and Organization

The purpose of the cross-Canada seminars was to provide a forum for the Canadian trade community to jointly assess the effects of anti-competitive shipping related policies being implemented by some of Canada's trading partners. Having identified the nature of the problems, participants were to give their views on the most appropriate course of action for Canadian industry and government to follow, when faced with such difficulties.

The coordinated views of Canada's trading community would be presented to the Canadian government for its consideration and guidance in developing a policy response appropriate to these difficult circumstances.

In order to elicit responses along these lines, the seminars were based on small intensive workshop discussion groups of 10-15 individuals. To help structure discussion in these workshops the Coalition, together with the Transportation Division of the Department of External Affairs, prepared questionnaires based on real-world trade and transportation problems which the trade community had faced in doing business with several less developed countries (LDC's). The questionnaire was designed to highlight the important consequences of the restrictive practices being encountered, in order to identify issues of significance to future policy makers. By following the same format in all five seminars it was possible to collate the conclusions of the different workshops.

The half-day of workshop discussions was followed by a seminar plenary session. At this session workshop moderators reported their group's recommendations for discussion and development of consensus recommendations by the seminar group as a whole.

The conference in Ottawa June 4th was designed as a national forum to focus consideration on the trade community's recommendations agreed to at the five regional seminars in Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Edmonton and Vancouver. Distinguished speakers from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Geneva, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Paris and the Federation of Latin America Shippers (FELACUTI) ensured that a

broad overview of the history pertaining to the issues was presented to the audience for their consideration in discussing prospective solutions to current problems. In addition to trade or 'shipper' interests represented at the seminars, representatives of the shipping or 'carrier' community were invited to hear the conclusions of Canada's trade community regarding these issues, and participate in discussions at the Ottawa conference.