

External Affairs
Supplementary Paper

No. 53/19 THE FUTURE OF THE GENERAL AGREEMENT
ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

Text of an address by the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. L.D. Wilgress, prepared for delivery at the Annual Convention of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, May 27, 1953, at Toronto, Ont.

...At the outset I would like to say a few words about what GATT is and what it stands for. The name is derived from the initials of the General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade, which was concluded at Geneva on October 30, 1947. It has also been said facetiously that the word GATT stands for the initials of Geneva, Annecy, Torquay and Toronto, the three places at which multilateral tariff negotiations have been held and the place where some of us hope the next round of tariff negotiations will be held.

It is useful to bear in mind these two derivations of the word GATT, that is, both the real derivation and the facetious one, because together they represent the two phases of what GATT stands for. First of all, it is an organization the membership of which is composed of the contracting parties to the first multilateral tariff agreement ever concluded. Secondly, it is a procedure for conducting a whole series of bilateral tariff negotiations between different countries in one place, at one time, and incorporating the results of these negotiations in one multilateral instrument. In both of these spheres GATT has demonstrated its usefulness and it is for this reason that I feel we can view its future with confidence.

As an organization GATT derives its existence from the stipulations of Article XXV of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade which provided for joint action by the Contracting Parties. By these stipulations it is required that representatives of the contracting parties shall meet from time to time for the purpose of giving effect to those provisions of the Agreement which involve joint action and, generally, with a view to facilitating the operation and furthering the objectives of the Agreement. It is under these stipulations that seven sessions of GATT have so far taken place. They have afforded an opportunity for representatives of the governments concerned to meet together and discuss not only matters arising out of the operation of the Agreement but also subjects of general interest in the commercial policy field. As such, GATT is the only organization on a worldwide basis that provides a forum for the discussion of matters relating to tariffs and commercial policy. The experience of the seven sessions that have been held has demonstrated the need for such an organization. It is safe to predict that increasing use will be made in the future of this forum.