

A preferred arrangement, however, would be for the agreement to assign political-level responsibility for its operation to the Canadian Minister of International Trade and the U.S. Trade Representative. More easily than a large group of Ministers and Secretaries, they could keep in close and regular contact, and consult together at short notice on emerging problems and issues. Also, by focussing political-level responsibility more narrowly for the operation of the agreement, consultations on both sides with provincial and state authorities as well as with the private sector would be facilitated, and reporting lines for sub-committees and working groups would be much clearer.¹⁷

In designing arrangements for bilateral consultations at the government level under the proposed agreement, it should be borne in mind that over recent years there has been an increase in opportunities for discussions relating to trade and economic issues by Canadian Ministers with their United States counterparts in a variety of other settings. These opportunities include, among others, annual meetings between the Prime Minister and the President, quarterly meetings between the Secretary of State for External Affairs and the United States Secretary of State, annual meetings of the Summit countries, annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, and regular meetings between the Minister of Agriculture and his United States counterpart. Moreover, by the nature of the bilateral relationship, Canadian Ministers and United States Secretaries have easy access to each other when occasions arise which call for less formal meetings and discussions between them.

Whatever the composition and functions of a new or refurbished intergovernmental committee, it is suggested below that quite separate arrangements should be made, under the proposed Joint Trade Commission, for the resolution of disputes relating to the operation of the agreement.

Moreover, no matter what new institutional arrangements are put in place under the new trade agreement, much of the daily management of the Canada-U.S. trade and economic relationship, will no doubt continue to be dealt with by traditional diplomacy. This process has long involved, and is certain to continue to involve, not only the Department of External Affairs and the State Department, but a great many other departments and agencies in Ottawa and Washington (as well as Parliament and Congress) and also the governments of the Canadian provinces and many of the U.S. states. Further, whatever new bilateral agreements and joint institutions are created at the federal government level, the network of links between provincial and state governments, and between private sector industries and trade associations in the two countries, can be expected to grow and flourish.

Proposed Joint Trade Commission

In addition to some form of inter-governmental arrangements to oversee the operation of the agreement, it is proposed that the agreement should contain provisions for the creation of an independent joint commission to assist in its implementation and operation, and perhaps also assist to in the management of other trade-related issues outside the strict confines of the agreement. The need for such a body, as noted earlier, has been proposed by several authorities in recent years.¹⁸ Its creation would be in line with well established and unique