

Unless this country is clear about equal treatment and vigorous in furthering it, the erosion of recent years is likely to grow, to the detriment of the United States and the decrease in the chances for making the world trading system more rational.

Breaking down problems as I have done in the foregoing sketch may suggest that the United States should have not one trade policy but at least three—for industrial countries, less-developed countries, and Communist countries—or perhaps even four if we count agriculture separately. In a sense this is correct but it is also misleading. The policies differ because they cope with different problems and exploit different ranges of possibility. The aims they serve, while not identical, must, in a high degree, overlap. Serving the interests of one country, these separate policies cannot make sense if they conflict with one another persistently or to an important degree—though some inconsistency is natural in a pluralistic society. The separation that is needed to pursue some ends effectively has to be accompanied by a common view of the whole, as to both ends and means.

Another factor that might make for fragmentation is the parceling out of trade tasks among a number of international agencies, notably GATT, OECD, UNCTAD, and, in a more limited way, ECE and the agencies for hemispheric cooperation in which U.S. relations with Latin American common markets and free trade areas are discussed. All this is in addition to direct negotiations with other governments and the European Economic Community, and in such bilateral bodies as the joint meetings of Cabinet members we have with Canada and Japan. No doubt there is some confusion, some overlap, some duplication; to an outsider it does not yet seem to have reached an alarming level, but that is the sort of thing on which the testimony of those closer to the events is more valuable. There is certainly a potential problem for the future. It is complicated by the fact that the criterion cannot be just neatness and order; we must ask, too, where action will be most effective and how American policy can best be furthered. The answer may differ at different times and vary according to issues. What is more it may not always be apparent and there may be need for probing or experimentation that will entail duplication and some waste.

Unfortunately, the ramification of trade policy described earlier in this paper is going to make the choice of forums more difficult, just as it will make the process of negotiation more complicated. The drawing into trade negotiations of many matters not formerly thought of as being part of trade policy is bound to have that effect. To the extent that any given issue can be separately pursued, one forum or another—including some not generally thought of as the loci of trade negotiations—may appear suitable, but such partial solutions will still leave the problem of the interrelatedness of all issues for bargaining purposes which has been mentioned several times above. It is probably not wise to try to lay down a rigid formula to cover all cases, but unless one has some principles in mind and some rough guidelines for practice there is a risk, not only of confusion, but of a failure of policy. This is true because the long-run aims of American trade policy must include the building and maintenance of a world trading economy and that goal is affected not only by the competence of organizations but by the rules that surround them.