

supposed to have their interests at stake in the ridiculous "poultry war" during early Kennedy Round maneuverings, the literate populations of the industrial countries do not approve of major government confrontations over economic trifles—even in the name of policy or principle. They are concerned at the sufferings of producer groups, but they want, on the whole, to see the public interest given priority. They have an emerging concept of a world public interest which is reflected in their readiness for wider understanding—they seek channels of specific information and informed expression. In this respect they are ahead of the public postures of their governments, in trade matters at least.

SECRET TRADE DISCUSSIONS ARE INADEQUATELY INFORMED

Where the public does not know what is being considered officially, official considerations will be inadequate for the public interest. The most palpable and pervasive reality observed by the writer in 30 years of association with intergovernmental trade discussions was ignorance—a lack of adequate factual information to judge the economic effects of the government actions discussed. Moreover, there was a direct correlation with secrecy; the more completely the discussions were kept from public knowledge, the less adequate the information and the more suspect the facts relied upon—obtained for the most part either from powerful parties at interest, uninformed generalists or subordinate officials vindicating their advice or program performance. Discussants need to know, in a relevant and reliable form, the economic and physical facts regarding the commodity involved (costs, production problems, utility, the availability of substitutes, trade details, and so forth). Paradoxically, the problem is not primarily a matter of fact gathering resources. The U.S. Government has experts covering almost every angle of information relative to trade—overall and commodity by commodity. The GATT secretariat and those of some of the other intergovernmental organizations, the U.S. Tariff Commission staff, and the hearings of the Interagency Trade Organization under the Trade Expansion Act have done notable fact-finding and fact-correlating work relevant for judging the effects of trade intervention in specific cases. But, while the accumulation and publication of facts is valuable, and more may be needed, the real problem is one of bringing facts and analysis to bear in a timely way as regards a specific situation. If the gamesmanship qualities of the bargaining process or the natural secrecy of governments make the official participants "hold their cards close to their chests," then the analysts and statisticians—in government as well as out—cannot help them with information necessary to discover the public interest (although the more powerful interests can sometimes reach them).

A SENIOR OFFICER FOR TRADE INFORMATION

What practical step can be taken to remedy some of the imperfections of communication and information exchange within the existing system of governing trade—with its concert of overpowerful but uncertain national executives, its self-confident international private-power complexes, and its tradition of secret negotiations inhibiting