

24 March 1966

SPEECH BY SIR RALPH FERRING, Bt.,
VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE FOR EXPORTS TO CANADA
AT THE EMPIRE CLUB, TORONTO, ON 24TH MARCH, 1966

May I thank you for the warm welcome you have extended to me this morning, and for the privilege of speaking to you now.

Your choice of words in referring to me as FORMER Lord Mayor of London is appreciated - in London, on coming out of Office one is called "the Late Lord Mayor," and that is liable to misinterpretation.

Before speaking of British/Canadian trade you have asked me to tell you something of my experiences in 1963 as Lord Mayor of London. This civic Office dates back to the year 1190 and I was, in fact, the 635th elected Lord Mayor to hold the Office. To us in London it is the greatest civic Office in the world for the history of London is the history of England itself. The Mayoralty and the City of London Corporation stand for a symbol of civic stability. It stands also for national prestige, for business integrity and honesty of purpose.

The election of Lord Mayor is open to anyone who can achieve it. This is not possible, however, unless one is prepared to serve at least ten years on the Court of Alderman during which time one attends to more than 200 duties a year. The Alderman's most important function during this period is as a Magistrate at the Mansion House or Guild Hall Justic Rooms (in fact, these two courts hear more than 21,000 cases each year).

The duties of Lord Mayor are exacting, stimulating and certainly incessant. I was informed at the conclusion of my Year in 1963 that I had attended 1,040 engagements, including 76 days presiding at the Justice Room. The Year also includes the making of 800 speeches on the widest variety of subjects.

One sometimes feels like the lady who, when asked what she thought of a certain subject replied "How do I know what I think until I hear what I say"!

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One develops the philosophy to accept each day as it comes. With up to seven engagements daily one learns never to fret about the responsibility of tomorrow or to worry about the problems of yesterday. Strangely enough with all the pressures one never gets tired - one is continually stimulated by the variety of duties that arise day by day.

I have always considered "Exporting" to be of the greatest importance to our national survival and I decided during my Mayoralty to make this my theme of the year from the Procession and Guild Hall Banquet speech. It followed, therefore, that when the City of London closed for the summer recess I came to Canada as the most important area to promote exports. This was based on civic visits to Quebec, Montreal, Toronto, London, Ontario, Ottawa, and then westwards to Vancouver and Victoria. After the conclusion of my Year I was invited to join the newly-formed Committee for Exports to Canada, which now takes up so much of my time on both sides of the Atlantic.

There is a rhyme that runs :

"At meetings attended with effort of will,
You should always contrive to keep perfectly still,
For it takes but one word of annoyance or pity
And, 'WHAM!' there you are on another committee!"

I now find myself on at least six separate committees involved in promoting exports to Canada.

You may expect me to give you a forecast of the result of our General Election this month at home - or even of Common Market possibilities. My reputation in London, however, is normally as a "do-er" rather than as Lord Mayor, a "sayer", and certainly not as a "soothsayer", and anyway, my thoughts and mission here in Canada at this moment in time are to assist others to promote greater trading between our two countries - to speak about Britain and British products.

As I have said this is by no means my first trip to your great country for I was here in Toronto as Lord Mayor of London in 1963, three times last year, and I hope to be here quite a lot in the future. By the same token

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you will continue to see many more British businessmen in Canada and Toronto from now on. We mean business - big business.

We in Britain have been in trade ever since the Romans helped to civilize us - some 2,000 years ago. Our record since then has been fairly impressive. I do not think that even our worst enemies would deny that we Britons have made a useful contribution to world economics and culture.

So much for the past. My concern is with the present and the future and, particularly, with the trading expansion between us. Canadian companies exporting to Britain will be with me from here on. They will, I think, be grateful for the fact that I do not propose to launch into a long grumble about the well-known imbalance of trade between our two countries.

I confine this to the simple statement that the U.K. is Canada's second biggest Export market in the world; that last year you sold us goods to the value of some \$1,300 million as against British earnings of \$600 million in your market. This, regrettably from our point of view, has been the prevailing pattern since the mid fifties.

The reasons for this imbalance are almost self-evident. More than 70 per cent of what you sell to us consists of raw and semi-processed materials required for British industries. What we sell to you consists, in the main, of capital and consumer goods, for which you can shop around the world. The list, fortunately for us, does include some things which are made either exclusively in Britain or are better value for money than can be obtained anywhere else.

It is our continuing intention to do all we can to reduce our Canadian trade deficit by selling to you more of the things you need and which are, in every respect, competitive with comparable goods from any other country.

I say this as Chairman of the Consumer Section of the recently-formed London Canadian Committee of the British National Export Council, which has been formed precisely for this purpose. We propose, with your co-operation, to organise and facilitate an invasion of your markets, for both industrial

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and consumer goods, on a greater scale than ever before. This is to be a long-term effort but our immediate target is on 1966 leading to our participation in your own Centennial celebrations in 1967.

Canadian politicians and importers might well ask - "Why the devil haven't you done this before?" "Why have you waited until now to begin hard selling in a country which has one of the highest growth rates in the world and will go on expanding?"

This could be answered in a number of ways but I suppose one simple truth is that in the past it has been a British trait to write and speak in terms of understatement - or even of self-denigration - we were taught in the nursery that "Self praise is no recommendation", and this has been often reflected in our selling techniques - they are certainly of little value in the hard business world of the North American Continent and we are at least replacing the "soft sell" with more aggression.

International trade must always be two-way trade, exports and imports - one is essential to the other - the purpose of our renewed efforts is to bring willing buyers and willing sellers together and we believe that with the goodwill prevailing, they will build their own trade.

To this end, massive plans are being made by the British Government and industry for promoting the presentation of British products here in Toronto in 1967.

Our British High Commissioner, Sir Henry Lintott, and Peter Allen, have already publicised some of our activities for the National Industrial Production Show in May, and Sir Henry and I are also speaking at 6 o'clock tonight of the formation of Committees for the promotion of a city-wide "British Week" in Toronto in October 1967.

How is British industry in general shaping up to the improving opportunities for trade with Canada? If the enthusiasm of some of our exporters already in the market is an indication, I should say "very well indeed". Many of them, especially in the capital goods field, have been

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selling to Canada for a long time. They have no illusions about the special difficulties, including the natural advantages of proximity of the United States, and that country's influence on marketing, packaging and other sales techniques. They are confident that they can compete and 'come hell or high water', they intend to go on doing so. In many cases, their success in Canada was won against fierce competition from all quarters and in spite of barriers which put them at a real disadvantage.

What we are doing now - and this is one of the main reasons for my visit - is to bring into the picture many of the smaller firms in all fields, but particularly in consumer goods, who, given the necessary know-how, could do equally well. In this instance, the business of my Committee (in collaboration with our colleagues of the B.C.T.A. and with the British Trade Commissions throughout Canada) is to supply that know-how. We are doing this in a number of ways which will, we hope, result in a much clearer knowledge of Canadian needs and how to meet them.

Some of our activities are very down-to-earth. We have, for instance, supported the British Canadian Trade Association in their imaginative scheme for setting up Display Centres in their offices here in Toronto and at Montreal. These Centres are used solely for promoting British imports to Canada. They are let free to firms not so far represented by agents and to those whose agents are members of the B.C.T.A. Other British firms can use them on very favourable terms. This means that representatives of British firms are now coming here - with sample ranges of the things they have to offer - in greater numbers than has been the case in the past. The Centres have already been used more than a dozen times since they were opened last summer and have housed exhibitions of giftware, pottery, carpets, Welsh handicrafts, foodstuffs and other items. The number of applications now in the pipeline from further companies and trade associations is most encouraging.

We have also travelled around Britain speaking to Chambers of Commerce and other organisations, urging them to send selling missions to Canada. The

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Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Industry made a very successful foray last October and this year and a whole series of missions (from Scotland, London, Tyneside and elsewhere) are to visit Canada.

For the rest of it, we are producing up-to-the-minute literature about the Canadian market and its opportunities. It is being produced to aid the British exporter and covers every angle of design, presentation and over-the-counter selling. Our chief weapon in this armoury is our handbook "Selling to Canada", the first print of which (10,000 copies) is now exhausted - a second edition has been prepared. We are also collaborating with the B.C.T.A. and two Canadian publishing firms in the production of up-to-date trade registers and editorial matter on British products.

We are very aware of the fact that Canada must still import more than half of her requirement of investment goods, which account for well over a third of sales to you at the present time. We are conscious also that the high standard of living, which springs naturally from your expanding economy, creates an ever-growing demand for quality consumer goods. Many of these are already being supplied by your own secondary industries. Fine. What we are looking for is an opportunity to fill the gaps. This we will do in fair and open competition.

As for British ability to rise to the occasion, may I in closing remind you that we have quite an impressive string of 'firsts' in all fields of human endeavour. They include, lest we forget, radar, gas-turbines, jetliners - and more recently - vertical take-off aircraft, hovercraft and the first commercial nuclear power station; and also, what some people would regard as a dubious contribution to mankind - television.

We are the world's largest exporter of agricultural tractors, commercial vehicles, woollen textiles, radio-isotopes, vacuum cleaners, washing machines, pianos, and many more things, down to cotton yarn and thread.

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I believe optimistically that by our own efforts at home, with your help and goodwill, and by means of a more determined and 'harder' sell, Britain's trade with Canada is on the upgrade at last. A definition of an optimist is a man who prefers to have a tankard of beer that is half full -- to a tankard that is half empty! -- and that applies to me. There is much to be done by our Committee for Exports to Canada, in conjunction with our British Trade Commissioners and the B.C.T.A. -- but one statistical fact stands out like a beacon light -- British exports to Canada for the past eight months, since July 1965, have increased by \$70 million over the same eight months of the previous year.

Where can we now take it from here?