

● (2:50 p.m.)

The first thing we did was to bring our 150 trade commissioners, from 50 foreign posts abroad, back to Canada to meet with our businessmen, and convince them that there is a place in the export market for their products. Some 1,350 Canadian businessmen came to Ottawa at that time, and spent one week conferring with our trade commissioners. Over 10,000 individual half hour interviews were held between our trade commissioners and our businessmen. The result of these conferences was that a great many of the businessmen who came to Ottawa at that time became convinced that there was a place for their products in the export market. They started travelling abroad, either individually or as members of the greatly enlarged trade commissions that we started sending abroad, and found they were able to make sales or, if not, that they were able to get information from foreign buyers of the countries they visited, who told them what they must do to bring their products into line to make sales. They came home, talked it over with their factory managers, and made adjustments in their products and in the prices of their products. The result was very important orders later on.

The second thing we did was to ask our trade commissioners when they returned to their posts to make a survey of the markets they served and to let us know which Canadian products then being produced could be sold in their markets, provided the necessary selling effort was put behind them. As a result, we received a startling list of more than 2,500 individual Canadian products which were then not being sold abroad, and which our trade commissioners said could be sold very easily if the proper selling effort was made. This list was circulated to all firms in Canada and was very useful to the heads of industries in planning export drives. It was not a general list but a specific list, giving to each product the name and address of the trade commissioner concerned, so that the manufacturer could immediately get in touch with the trade commissioner, and obtain information on what he would have to do to sell his product in that particular market.

Then, in June of that year, our government began systematically to lower the value of the Canadian dollar in terms of the United States dollar in order to make our products more competitive in the export market and to make foreign products less competitive in the Canadian market. This was done so that our

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producers who sell overseas could sell their goods more easily and so that those producers who sell in the home market could sell more easily against foreign competition here in Canada. This move was of tremendous benefit to Canadian producers generally. As you know, Mr. Speaker, in May of 1962 the dollar was finally pegged at 92½ cents U.S. This deliberate devaluation of the Canadian dollar by the Canadian government made our products 10 per cent more competitive in foreign markets than they were before this survey was taken.

In addition, foreign costs generally, and European costs particularly, have risen spectacularly in the last few years, so that our products today are from 20 per cent to 25 per cent more competitive in the world market than they were when the survey was originally taken in early 1961. I am convinced that if another survey were taken today by the Department of Trade and Commerce, we would find that, instead of our original list of 2,500 products that were not being sold overseas, the list would be several times larger. I strongly commend to the minister that another survey be taken immediately for the benefit of the Canadian economy.

The third thing we did was this. Realizing there were many Canadian businessmen who had not been able to come to Ottawa for our first conference, we decided to take government to the people and held conferences in the capital cities of all the ten provinces, including three conferences in Ontario because of the far greater demand by the manufacturers and merchants of this province. More than 5,000 businessmen attended those conferences, mostly small businessmen who, up till that time, had never thought for a moment that there would be any place for their products in the export market. As in the case of those who attended the first conference in Ottawa, a great many of them became convinced that there was a place for their products in the export market if they were helped, as we indicated they would be, by the officials of the Department of Trade and Commerce. They started making trips overseas, both as individuals as members of the trade commissions that we sent overseas, and a great many were able to make sales either on the first trip or, having been advised what was necessary to sell their product in the export market, were able to make sales later on.

We did a great many other things to help this export drive get started. I have not time