

Our national character and individual faith in our country being what they are, there could be only one answer. Collectively, we chose progress rather than retreat; but progress involved two factors. The first was a return toward at least the measure of free international trade that existed before the war; the second was the dissemination throughout the world of the knowledge that Canada was newly equipped to enter industrial markets as both buyer and seller on a fairly heavy scale.

Toward the liberation of international trade, our representatives at Geneva and later at Havana have been striving vigorously and, I think, effectively. In the economic as in the diplomatic sphere, it is safe to say that Canada has played a part out of proportion to the size of her population.

In working toward the main purpose, these spokesmen of Canada were incidentally helping to achieve the secondary one of publicizing the nation's new industrial maturity. Similarly, trade commissioners throughout the world were endeavouring to interest businessmen in the increased potentialities of Canada as a source of supply and as a market. I need hardly add that these official efforts have been re-inforced by Canadian businessmen on tour, by the work of business organizations interested in foreign trade, and by the excellent export press which is developing so rapidly in Canada.

But it seemed to the Department of Trade and Commerce, and to the businessmen who, individually and collectively work closely with it, that there should be a more spectacular demonstration of Canada's eagerness both to stimulate world trade and to claim a fair share of it. The method approved after long consideration was nearly as old as trade itself and yet so new to the North American scene that it took on much of the nature of a gamble.

It was, of course, a Trade Fair -- a miniature of the great world of commerce; a centre where, for two weeks, businessmen of all countries could negotiate in the traditional freedom of the marketplace; where, more importantly, they could negotiate from face to face, buy and sell on the basis of samples which could be seen and handled. There, they could try to hurdle artificial barriers to trade; and, with experts readily available, could work out the complexities of exchange-rates and shipping routes and documentations.

To many of us, I think, the one chief appeal of the idea lay in the human element which is injected into the cold transaction of international trade. Instead of formal letters exchanged between strangers remote from one another in distance, race and language, there would be the personal contact which each of us realize to be the familiar, effective way of doing business. We can at least hope that association with future customers and suppliers will tell us something of the men with whom we hope to deal -- their methods, their problems, their way of thinking.

These, then, were our motives. If they were to be translated in a successful fair, then other men in other countries would have to feel much as we did. They would have to share our hopes for a restoration of trade, and our impatience with artificial restraints upon it. Like us, they would have to gamble on the feasibility of a Trade Fair in the New World; in the aggregate, their stake would be much greater than ours. We believed, when we laid our plans that there would be enough like-minded men, willing and able to come, to make a success of the fair. We had not anticipated the overwhelming response. It is, I suggest, an encouraging indication of man's desire to deal, peacefully and with mutual profit, with his neighbours.