

II. The Trade Commissioner Service: Adapting to Change

The Trade Commissioner Service (TCS) has led the government's trade development efforts for close to 100 years. TCS was founded largely in order to sell Canadian wheat, timber and other resource products. Canadian trade policy was largely British trade policy; the United Kingdom was our largest trading and investment partner at the time.

Under George Foster, Minister of Trade and Commerce, 1911-21, the Service, then called the Commercial Intelligence Service, was established on a professional basis. Recruitment and training for assistant trade commissioners became formal and systematic. The forerunner to Statistics Canada was established to provide both trade and basic economic information. A foreign tariffs division was established to advise exporters of tariffs and related matters they faced in foreign markets. Post operations were systematically reviewed.

I fear there is no concealing the fact that the Trade Commissioner Service is at a low ebb in Canadian public opinion, and it is necessary to overcome this condition before effective and valuable work can be done.

Richard Grigg, Commissioner of Commerce, 1912-16

As the manufacturing sector developed in the years following World War I, TCS increasingly promoted Canadian industrial products abroad. As a result the departmental publication, the *Commercial Intelligence Journal*, provided more varied and detailed information to Canadian exporters. Trade commissioners were expected to prepare long and exhaustive country-wide market studies. A publicity branch was later formed to coordinate and prepare publications for overseas markets and inform trade commissioners of developments in Canada and other promotional materials.

The UK, then still Canada's largest trading partner, was granted the most resources and personnel, both in London and at various satellite offices. As the largest operation, it became over time a testing ground for the Trade Commissioner Service as a whole. This not only applied to trade fairs and missions, publicity and other promotional techniques but also on issues such as relations with other government departments and the role of the specialist versus generalist trade commissioner. Presence in the US market was limited to New York; the resident trade commissioner concentrated his efforts on investment development and the international aspects of New York as a trading centre rather than on trade development.

Steamship subsidies were the main program the Department used to encourage trade. Frequent and cost effective transport was seen as necessary to export success in all export markets, including the UK, the West Indies, Australia and the Orient.