



## STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION  
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
OTTAWA - CANADA

THE "UNKNOWN" CUSTOMER

Address by Mr. Donald Gordon, Deputy Governor of the Bank of Canada, to the Annual Convention of Advertising and Sales Clubs of Canada and the United States, in Cleveland, May 22, 1948.

You are the technicians of the great modern profession of salesmanship. The sales executives and the advertising executives gathered here tonight have developed and refined the technique of selling until it has become something of an art and a science.

In this technique you have established the rules that are fundamental to success. I do not propose to discuss all of them tonight... nor am I qualified to do so...but I do want to single out one.

That one cardinal rule is to "know your customer."

The sales and advertising fraternity have outdone themselves in research to learn the likes...dislikes...prospects...and state of mind of those who are likely to be customers for their product or service.

This makes the paradox I wish to present to you tonight all the more provocative.

In the country where salesmanship has reached its most extensive development...where the greatest pains are taken to know the circumstances of every customer...where it is not unusual for men and women to be asked titillating questions about their private affairs in order that great sales campaigns can go forward...it is strange to discover that one of the biggest customers of all is practically unknown.

What information does circulate about this customer is often sketchy and misleading.

The customer I have been speaking of is, of course, Canada.

Last year Canada was responsible for the purchase of two-and-a-half billion dollars worth of American goods and services. That is big business. It is close to one-seventh of all the international business done by the United States.

The first reaction of many Americans to the challenge that they know little of their most important customer is to say, "We agree that we should know more about you...But you seldom tell us anything about yourself. How can we be expected to know?"

I agree at once that Canadians are not free of responsibility in this matter. I admit that a good customer...who wants to become a better customer...has an obligation to supply information on his own initiative. But even if we do need to "toot our own horn" more than we do, that does not alter the fact that the scale of your commercial interests calls for much more initiative on your side than has been apparent in the past.