

October is Canada Export Trade month. The decision to mount a promotion of this kind was a collegial one, taken by myself and the provincial ministers responsible for trade.

We all agree that consolidating and improving our trade position must be a matter of high priority for all of us. And, we agreed that we should do everything possible to enhance understanding, particularly among businesses which are potential exporters, of the importance of export trade, and the opportunities offered by export markets.

We also want to promote understanding among the general public of the vital role exports play in our national economy. Nearly a third of our gross national product is generated by exports. A fifth of our workforce is involved with exports in one way or another. In 1982 we exported goods for a value of 85 billion dollars. But there's a sense among business people and politicians that exports are perhaps the "over-looked third of our national economy". We want to remedy that. We want Canadians to know what exports mean...and what the export imperative is. We almost have to express this negatively...to say "Here's where we'd be without exports."

Where we'd be is as follows...a very significant share of our employed workforce would have no work, whether in agriculture, manufacturing, transportation, whatever and with all that that implies for a convalescent economy. Equally important, we would have no foreign earnings with which to buy those things we cannot grow or otherwise produce for ourselves.

That latter thought can be expressed in very down-to-earth terms. I have no doubt we could all get along without tea, or coffee, or orange juice in the morning. We could manage without fresh lettuce in the winter...and mandarin oranges for the Christmas stocking. We could likely manage fairly well without stereos and color televisions in a subsistence economy but such changes in our way of life would be substantial.

So, we can revise downward our expectations of and demands upon the economic structure. Or we can keep, and even raise, our expectations. But if we choose the latter, we have to embrace a very straightforward notion: if we want to buy abroad, we must sell abroad.

Whether it's a can of frozen orange juice, or a Ferrari, if you buy it offshore, you're going to have to sell something offshore to generate the exchange to buy it with. Otherwise, pretty soon somebody's got all the money, and somebody else has none. Not a balanced system, obviously.