

## ★ ★ ★ REQUESTS FOR CONFERENCE SPEAKERS ★ ★ ★

1. The number, frequency and popularity of business conferences, economic seminars and trade symposiums, particularly in the United States, has, for a variety of reasons, increased in recent years. Occasionally some of these meetings of minds are concerned with Canadian affairs, and consulates and Canadian trade officers are often asked to help organize panels of Canadian speakers.

2. Since the current trend may presage a growing demand for Canadian participants in such events it might be useful to review experience both at posts and in Ottawa in meeting this problem, and to consider certain factors which must influence the degree of help offices can provide.

3. The three main considerations are the purpose and prestige of the conference or seminar; the limited pool of prominent, able, and available Canadian speakers; and the time allowed to find them.

4. In his own territory the Trade Commissioner is clearly the best judge of the prestige status of such conferences organized by either business associations or universities. He will naturally avoid committing his own resources or the Department's to these projects unless he is sure that the returns in trade publicity are worth the efforts. When major conferences are called by organizations or groups of national importance on the subject of relations with Canada he can expect all the help that the Department can provide.

5. It is at this point that the second factor comes most sharply into focus. Whereas meetings of learned societies are more concerned with the professional quality of their speakers' papers than with their personalities or newsworthiness, organizers of the type of business conference with which we are concerned look for both. They usually prefer "name people" who can put on an impressive performance — the address itself can always be re-searched by a good ghost!

6. Consider, for example, what subjects might titillate Canadian-American business groups: investment, and its ownership and control; access to markets; taxation; materials policy; and others. For obvious reasons it is not always possible for senior government officials to represent Canada by speaking at such conferences. Similarly, of the top business executives available, numbers of them are the heads of United States subsidiaries and may be inhibited from taking a position on controversial questions which would advance the Canadian point of view. These and other like considerations reduce the supply of prominent, newsworthy speakers who can give us strong, colorful representation. The remaining, available, gallant few carry a correspondingly heavy load.

7. The third factor — the time allowed to find speakers — is important. Speakers on any one subject can only be solicited individually and one at a time. In a recent exercise we had to go through a list of sixteen possible speakers, one at a time, before finally — more by luck than anything else —