

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
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No. 56/40 "JAPAN -- OUR NEIGHBOUR ON THE PACIFIC"

An Address by the Rt. Hon. C.D. Howe, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Trade and Commerce to The Women's
Canadian Club, Montreal, December 3, 1956.

Madame President and ladies, I thank you for your invitation to speak to you today. Yours is the first invitation I have ever received to speak to a non-political group of ladies, so this occasion is something of a milestone in my more than 21 years in public life.

I believe that the Department of Trade and Commerce is the most interesting portfolio for its Minister in the government. The Department has various responsibilities, but perhaps its principal one is to develop trade relations with other countries. For this purpose, we have a staff of more than 100 Trade Commissioners, one or more of whom are located in every country in the world. Through this staff, the Department keeps in touch with trade possibilities in every country, and is constantly seeking outlets for commodities that are surplus to our own requirements. Of these surpluses, the most difficult to dispose of are wheat and barley, although we must also keep open markets for our lumber and newsprint, our metals, our fish, and certain of our manufactured goods. We must be familiar with changes in the commercial outlook of each country, and be ready to take advantage of any change favourable to Canada. At the same time, we must be ready to find alternative markets where changes are less favourable.

For some years, I have been greatly interested in the Japanese situation. Since the war ended, Canada has followed a steady policy of promoting good relations with Japan. Japan is an island country, with a present population of 90 million people, which has increased by more than the population of Canada in the period I refer to. Every arable square inch of the country is being cultivated, and yet Japan now must import 40 per cent of its foodstuffs. That in itself is a matter of great interest to Canada, with its surpluses of wheat and barley. The fact that Canada and Japan are neighbours across the Pacific indicates trade possibilities that must deserve our careful attention.

Before the Second World War, trade between Canada and Japan was small and relatively unimportant. There was very little