

middle and far West. But you do not get a hint of that from the figures of external trade as between ourselves and foreign lands. How it would change our efforts and stimulate our hopes and give us confidence in this country if we just knew what was going on in that respect. So I say what we want to do, and what I believe we should be able to do, is to arrange for a system of gathering this information and make it open and useful to the people of this country.

You as a Board of Trade, wholesalers, manufacturers, retail dealers, transport men, every kind of business men can assist my Department very much in that respect. You know the trade currents, the methods of distribution, and I shall have some of my officers commissioned especially for that purpose, and have them wait upon you in this and other boards of trade and get from you the information we believe you possess and which will enable us to lay down and carry out our system—not perhaps to get at the absolute exact figures, but to aim for that approximation which shall make them really valuable, and which is about all that can be hoped for in any system you may inaugurate.

Now, I have said some few things to you with reference to my Department and the relations which I think may exist between that department and the different boards of trade. I feel that sitting in my office at Ottawa there is after all opportunity to know only a small proportion of the business men of this country. There is many a chance to make a mistake and many an opportunity lost for avoiding the making of mistakes, and I want as far as possible by communication and intercourse in the way I have outlined to get at what will be the best, the most sensible and the most practical conclusions and put them into execution as far as the Government and my Department find it practicable so to do.

I thank you for turning out in large numbers to listen so attentively to what I have had to say. I shall come before you again if you do not do something along the lines I have mentioned. If you do not help me I shall keep you in mind of it and keep after you until in some way I twist out of you the things my Department are after.

This city of Montreal, in one respect is at the gateway of our great Dominion. Through it passes in and out a vast proportion of