

On November 14, 1944, the Minister of Trade and Commerce, Hon. J. A. MacKinnon, announced that H. L. E. Priestman had been appointed chief executive officer of the Export Credits Insurance Corporation. Headquarters of the new corporation will be in Ottawa.

COMMERCIAL INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

Canada enters the post-war period with no advantages over its allies. Having devoted all its efforts to war production, it has been able to turn only about one-fifth of its exports into normal trade channels. Like all other allied nations, Canada will have to sell on the quality of its goods, their price and accessibility. Thus if Canada is to have its share of the post-war trade, it must be ready to act quickly when the war is over. It cannot delay in sending representatives to their posts in the liberated countries, able and ready to report to Canadian industry as to the goods that are needed.

This vital work will be entrusted to the Commercial Intelligence Service which has been maintained for more than a generation by the Department of Trade and Commerce--actually since 1892, when the department itself was set up. The department's first report mentioned commercial agents in Jamaica, Antigua, St. Kitts, Barbadoes, Trinidad, Demerara and Norway. Before 1895 these commercial agents were businessmen, but on January 1, 1895, the first fully paid commercial agent was appointed in Sydney, Australia. In 1907 there was a change in nomenclature, and since then the title "trade commissioner" has been used for the full-time officers. For some time after 1907 the title "commercial agent" was used to designate businessmen who received an honorarium for carrying on routine duties for the department.

Since then offices have been administered by trade commissioners, supported by one or more assistant trade commissioners as required by the volume of work. In 1939 there were about 50 such representatives established in 36 offices in 26 countries. As the war spread 11 trade commissioners or assistants had to close offices in enemy or occupied countries and return to other duties in Canada. Where possible, however, they will return to the cities where they were stationed before the war.

The function of these trade commissioners is to build up a demand for Canadian goods by linking Canadian exporters with foreign importers. They also study and report on conditions and import requirements in their territories; make direct inquiries and conduct preliminary surveys regarding the market for any product; and report the types of goods wanted, the competition to be met and the methods of packing, shipping and billing required. Since the outbreak of hostilities the trade commissioners have been performing an increasing number of war duties; this applies particularly in countries within the British Commonwealth and Empire, where questions of supply are being dealt with constantly.

Trade commissioners are called on to consider complaints and the settlement of claims arising from the shipment of Canadian goods; to inspect damaged and short shipments; to arrange bank accommodation for importers on drafts improperly drawn by exporters; to arrange for the quick release of goods by the customs, and unofficially to approach customs officials regarding disputed tariff classifications covering Canadian goods; to facilitate release of goods by shipping companies and the customs when documents covering shipments fail to arrive on time; and to assist in the collection of unpaid drafts, unpaid consignment accounts, unpaid commissions, etc. These forms of assistance constitute an important feature of their services to Canadian exporters.