

Orange, Field Days
Orange, N.S.W.

November 13-16, 1978

SPEECH FOR THE CANADIAN RECEPTION

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you here tonight.

The Australian National Field Days are now well and truly underway and from the crowds we have seen here today, the 27th Show will be yet another success. I am sure that the Canadian exhibitors have contributed to this success in no small measure.

As Guest Nation we are a main feature of the Show and we have chosen to stress our country's expertise in dryland farming as our main theme. We have been fortunate in having outstanding participation by a number of Canadian companies. Some of these companies are already well established in Australia while others are relative newcomers. All of them depend on the support of their Australian distributors for their continued success and I extend a special welcome to those distributors present here this evening.

During the Field Days the Canadian exhibitors will be demonstrating their equipment and we will be holding a special forum which will emphasize the techniques that Canadian farmers and researchers have developed for use with the equipment featured at our display. These field trials are undoubtedly the best way to show Australian farmers just what our machines are capable of doing.

Australia is a very important market for Canadian manufactured products. Agricultural machinery is a significant element in our exports and our sales last year amounted to almost C. \$10 million. This level of sales we have achieved at a time when many Australian farmers were facing lower incomes due to drought and low commodity prices. From the latest reports I have received the outlook for Australian agriculture has brightened considerably. With improved returns Australian farmers may soon be back in the market for agricultural machinery of all kinds. The effort expended by our participating companies, their distributors and the organizers of the Field Days, could well be rewarded by increased sales.

The prospect of such sales can only serve to increase the interest of Canadian agricultural equipment manufacturers in Australia as a market. Increased trade means increased contact between our countries and this has been one of the most rewarding benefits obtained though our participation as Guest Nation at Orange in 1978.

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SPEECH FOR OFFICIAL OPENING

Mr. President, Members of the Organizing Committee,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

May I express my pleasure and that of my Government that Canada was invited to be Guest National at the 27th Australian National Field Days.

Canada and Australia have many things in common in spite of the vast physical distance which separates us. Perhaps the strongest link between our two countries is the sharing of a common language and many of the traditions that are part and parcel of our British heritage. Canada, of course, is also a bilingual country and a vigorous French culture flourishes in many parts of Canada. Like Australia, our indigenous people have benefitted from the contribution of people from other countries who have introduced a variety of ethnic backgrounds, which have enriched our cultural life. The completion of our first transcontinental railway in the 1880's opened up our Prairie region to immigrants. European homesteaders poured in to build the riche agricultural and ethnic mosaic that exists today in the prairie provinces.

These pioneers who homesteaded Western Canada less than a hundred years ago faced tremendous hardships as they tried to cope with Western Canada's hot, dry summers and long, cold winters. They also had to attempt to farm virgin land which almost defied ploughing until the introduction of steam tractors.

Some of these groups brought with them the knowledge, which, once adapted, enabled them to farm the new lands of our West. They understood from experience in their homelands how to deal with the extremes of temperature and the dry climate that had doomed earlier attempts at settlement. Most importantly, they brought varieties of wheat from the Ukraine and elsewhere, which, when crossed with early maturing wheat from India gave Canada a range of new grains from which the strength of our Western agriculture first sprang. Similarly, Australian agriculture had to await the work of Farrer before your grain industry could flourish.

While Canadian and Australian wheat producers may envy each other's export successes from time to time, surely that is a rather shortsighted and ultimately negative perception. Naturally, as major sellers of wheat we compete in world markets. This rivalry is understandable and indeed serves our customers well since it rewards efficiency. Let me remind you, however, that we carry a collective responsibility to help in providing good-quality, nutritional food for a hungry world. Moreover, in recognition of the benefits which a more disciplined approach to the marketing of wheat can confer, Canada and Australia have joined with other important producers and consumers in negotiations which strive to attain a new International Wheat Agreement.

Since I have been in Australia I have been reminded many times of the efficiency of this country's agricultural sector. Together with the mining industry, agriculture accounts for approximately 80% of Australia's export earnings. In the case of agriculture this performance has been achieved with a minimum of help from the Government. Agricultural exports in Canada are also a large earner of foreign exchange. The ability of our two nations to export food stuffs in spite of intense competition is ample evidence of the basic efficiency of our agricultural industries.

The growing of wheat and other agricultural products is the reason why we find ourselves here today. The machines and equipment which will be demonstrated and displayed at the Field Days are simply the means to achieve this end. Their size, complexity and cost serve to remind us of how agriculture has developed over the years. Farming in Canada and Australia has changed to a large degree because of the existence of machines such as these about us. The dominant development on the farm machinery scene during the seventies has been the appearance of very large tractors and implements. When these machines are used in conjunction with innovative agronomic techniques they can greatly increase the farmer's productivity. It is this increase in productivity that justifies their much higher costs. The capabilities of these machines will undoubtedly be put to the test during the field trials.

One man can now farm three to four times the area he could have only twenty years ago. As a result, the numbers of farmers in both countries have decreased markedly - a development that caused great hardship amongst those forced to leave their life on the land. However, a new era of stability now seems to have arrived and those farmers who remain stand a much better chance of receiving an adequate reward for their efforts.

The Canadian products on display here today are of particular interest to Australian grain growers. Many of these products, designed originally for use under Prairie conditions, have already found widespread acceptance in Australia. The presence of twelve Canadian exhibitors at the Field Days is a welcome reminder of just how suitable these machines have proven to be when used under Australian conditions.

Exports of Canadian agricultural machinery and equipment to Australia are an important element in our trade with this country, and trade between countries is a very real and strong link. At a time when many of the irritants between nations trade their origins to trade problems, I am pleased to be able to assure you that Canada/Australia trade relations are mutually rewarding. This is not to say that we never disagree. Quite to the contrary, the depth and breadth of our relations are such that frequently we need to discuss problems and how they might be resolved. But there are few, if any, people Canadians would rather discuss matters with than Australians, and I sincerely hope that the reverse is true as well. I trust that this week you will find many instances where, as much between those serving the agricultural sector as between government officials there is a Canadian/Australian cordiality and understanding which few other nations can match.

As major exporting nations we share a mutual interest in ensuring that trade between countries can proceed in relative freedom. We do not belong to any of the great trading blocs that have emerged in the last thirty years. Australia and Canada both have to do the best they can in an economic environment that is less than perfect. We must export, as neither country has a large enough population to support the industrial development which is essential to our way of life. In spite of the fact that many of our exports are competitive with one another, we may have more in common as trading nations than we realize. I like to believe that we can and will learn from each other and that our relationship will continue to be based more on co-operation than on competition.

At the beginning of my speech I mentioned that our countries had a great deal in common. Many of these uniting factors are often taken for granted. Both of our countries have somewhat similar federal constitutions and both have Parliamentary systems based on the Westminster model. In two world wars of this century, we have been close allies. Canada and Australia today find themselves highly dependent upon exports of primary products. Our people have had to cope with the twin problems of inflation and unemployment. We both can take some satisfaction in the fact that the agricultural sectors in our countries have continued to perform efficiently in spite of the difficult economic situation prevailing throughout the world.

Canada has prospered by being receptive to new ideas in a new setting. This has been true in particular for our agriculture. Our presence here today as participants in the Field Days is perhaps best seen as an extension of this process. We have come to learn and hopefully to teach. It is the opportunity for this type of exchange that has drawn people from all over Australia here today.

I take great pleasure in declaring the 27th Australian National Field Days open.

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RESPONSE TO MAYOR'S WELCOMING SPEECH

Your Honour, Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of myself and the Canadian exhibitors, I would like to thank you for your kind words of welcome. We are all very pleased to be involved as representatives of Canada, your Guest Nation at the 27th Australian National Field Days.

I understand that there has been a Guest Nation at the Field Days since 1964. When I consider how similar farming in Australia is to its Canadian counterpart, I am surprised that it has taken until this year for Canada to put in an appearance at Orange. Surely no two countries have more in common in this regard. Canadians have made tremendous contributions to the successful practice of dry land farming as have Australians. We undoubtedly have a great deal to learn from one another and I think the Field Days provides an ideal venue for such an exchange to take place. I can only regret that we have not been able to come together before this time.

In the period of over a year that I have spent in Australia I have been fortunate enough to gain some appreciation for your country and its people. I have seen Australia in the grip of last year's severe drought and now in the midst of one of the best seasons for some years. I sincerely trust that the prospect of near record crops this year will mean a marked improvement in farm incomes.

All the exhibitors at the Field Days will undoubtedly appreciate the increased interest displayed by many of the visitors in their products. Farmers in Canada are renowned for their readiness to upgrade their complement of machines and equipment following a good year. It seems reasonable to assume that Australian farmers are similarly inclined.

The hardships faced by farmers in their efforts to make their living from the land are not often appreciated by those who have no first hand experience of farm life. The perseverance required to overcome the inevitable set backs due to drought, disease or low prices is remarkable. The problem of isolation is not unknown in Australia and it will remain a problem as long as farming or stock raising is carried out in remote regions of the country. Farm life in Canada is still renowned for its isolation, a problem that is particularly unpleasant during our long severe winters. Only the inherent optimism of farmers and the desire to be their own man - or woman - can see them through under these conditions.

Of course isolation is not considered by everyone to be a disadvantage. Although farm life involves hard work and irregular hours it moves to a more natural rhythm than does city life. Farm people are spared the overcrowding of the cities and the associated problems of pollution, high costs for housing, traffic congestion and a higher crime rate. Furthermore, isolation no longer is as absolute as it once was as radio and television continue to become available to country people.

Fortunately the introduction of new services to country areas has done much to offset the worst effects of isolation. In the more settled parts of rural Canada and Australia new social patterns have emerged. For example, Orange appears to me to represent a new type of city that has grown into a major regional centre even though it remains dependent on an essentially rural based economy. In Canada a similar pattern of thriving "mini-cities" has evolved in our great grain producing region, the Prairies. Improved roads, the availability of better schools and vastly improved communications have resulted in a consolidation of the rural population which was formerly spread out on small farms and in country towns. In Canada farms have increased in size and the rural population has declined. Many small country towns that once served only a limited area have actually disappeared. The loss of the small towns has often been lamented in Canada, as it undoubtedly has in Australia, but there is no doubt that the other side of the coin is that the process of consolidation has enhanced economic growth - growth which has resulted in prosperous farms and prosperous cities of which Orange is an excellent example.

It would be hard to argue against the satisfying life cities such as your own great cosmopolitan centres such as Sydney or Melbourne offer to their citizens and to the people in the region they serve. However, good schools and hospitals and a wide range of shopping and entertainment are no longer confined to the big cities. They are available to both the major centres and the surrounding countryside.

To the best of my knowledge none of our regional centres has an exhibition that would compare with this one. Perhaps this is due more to our traditional use of the Provincial capital for such events. I am sure that the officials and citizens of many of these country centres in Canada would envy you your remarkable success in holding such a large and varied exhibition.

I am very impressed with your concept of the Field Days being an occasion in which the exhibits are put to the test by means of actual field trials. Having machinery and equipment on static display cannot compare with having them go through their paces before a knowledgeable and highly critical audience. All the exhibitors will undoubtedly try to ensure that their products excel during the various trials and competitions which will soon be underway.

The Field Days have served to bring national attention to Orange and its surrounding districts. I sincerely hope that this year's Field Days will continue the tradition of success that has characterized this event since its inception 27 years ago.