Speech given by HRH the Prince of Wales to a Luncheon in Zurich

Speech given by HRH The Prince of Wales to a Luncheon in Zurich given by the British/Swiss Chamber of Commerce on the Occasion of their 60th Anniversary on 18th January, 1980

First of all I would like to say how relieved I am that I have actually arrived here today. Last year when I came to visit a new dairy in Zurich diaster struck. There was snow at London airport and no aircraft could take off. I was about three hours late and *nothing* could be done about it. Frankly, after that, I am amazed I have been asked back to Zurich again, but such is the quality of Swiss hospitality . . .! Perhaps the whole incident merely served to highlight the fact that London Airport is seriously lacking in those splendid snow-removing vehicles which perform such miracles here in Switzerland.

Whatever the case, I am delighted to be here on the 60th anniversary of the British/Swiss Chamber of Commerce and to have the chance of wishing its members a very happy birthday and a most successful future. I am honoured and flattered to have been asked to speak at this lunch and, I must confess, a little surprised for I am most decidedly not an expert on British-Swiss trade matters — merely someone who is impressed by the fact that Switzerland is the U.K.'s seventh largest export market and that trade between our two countries has increased steadily in value over the years. I am also someone who is impressed by the way in which the Swiss organise themselves. As far as the ski-ing industry is concerned, which I must admit is the one I know best (after the dairy industry!), the effortless efficiency and good humour with which the whole operation is carried out is a great example to many. As a result I cannot resist coming back each year!

But I am not here to talk about ski-ing. Ladies and gentlemen, the new decade has opened with a good deal of uncertainty on the world stage. Challenges to our way of life may be even more pressing than during the seventies. The complexity of world events makes it necessary to keep channels of communication between nations open. The British/Swiss Chamber of Commerce is one such channel — and I am delighted to see that it performs such a useful function in providing constant assistance in the promotion of trade and greater understanding.

Prince Charles and Federal Councilor Dr. Kurt Furgler in conversation (Photo Credit Suisse)

There are many differences, both social and structural, between Britain and Switzerland. However, we do share the same firm dedication to free and democratic systems of government. The 1970s seem to have seen a new awareness in the world of the need to defend human rights and freedoms. Our two countries share a profound respect for these and no doubt both our countries realise that determined efforts will be needed in the 1980s to further the protection of the basic rights of the individual in many parts of the world. But at the same time I always feel we ought to remember that we have obligations as well as rights and freedoms. It is impossible to have true freedom without obligations to our fellow men. And that, in a sense, must be one of the basic principles behind such organisations as the EEC and EFTA.

For Britain, one of the most important events of the seventies was her joining the Common Market. By the end of the new decade, the Nine will have become the Twelve. In spite of some of our current problems with our EEC partners, Britain is nevertheless anxious to play a full and significant part in the development of the Community. Our imperial past is now well behind us. Our recognition of this has perhaps been slow, but we are gradually coming to terms with our new status in the world.

Switzerland and Britain both rely heavily on access to World markets, and Britain is fortunate in having a long and stable trading relationship with Switzerland. The world trading scene has, in recent years, become much more competitive. However, Switzerland as a member of EFTA and Britain as a member of the EEC are two of sixteen countries, which collectively form an area in which most industrial goods may now be freely traded. The expansion of the EEC will increase this number and thus access to other markets to the benefit of all concerned: HMG are also aware that the interests of non-members of the EEC in Western Europe must be taken into account. Much has been done to reduce barriers to trade but during the next decade there remains much to be done to ensure the smooth implementation of the measures agreed during the Tokyo Round and to further develop these where desirable.

In addition to international trade, our two countries have long recognised the advantages to be gained from the free movement of capital, knowledge and skills across the international boundaries. Britain has traditionally been a major investor abroad. Between 1973 and 1977 British companies invested £4 billion in overseas manufacturing subsidiaries, about £200 million of which was in Switzerland. Swiss companies in turn invested a similar amount in the UK. The recent abolition of exchange controls makes Britain more open than ever to two-way investment exchange. There are benefits for both parties in this process. We see the attraction of overseas investment in the UK as offering us the opportunity to acquire new management and management styles; it can also help to speed up the rate of technology transfer through new products and processes and ensure that the UK benefits from new industrial growth areas; and of course it can generate new employment and provide alternative employment in areas where jobs are being lost through the process of industrial change. But it is not a one-sided deal. We also hope that Britain will offer the prospect of a profitable base from which overseas companies can operate. Many companies which already export to the UK have realised the advantages of setting up a manufacturing plant within the UK to exploit our market ever better. The proof of this is plain to see. There are today about 100 Swiss companies in the UK which, according to the most recent figures available, employ about 50,000 people in some 180 manufacturing units. This represents total assets valued at almost 1,800 million Swiss francs. Some of the larger of these companies such as Nestle and Hoffman La Roche are recognised internationally as household names. I need hardly tell you of their success both in the UK and elsewhere. The experience of these and other companies represents tangible evidence of the mutual benefits that investment exchange can bring and demonstrates the importance of further strengthening the industrial links between our countries.

The past two or three decades have been notable for the important role that increasingly sophisticated technology has played in industrial development and the impact that these developments have had on everyday life. The increasing use of communication technologies, the wider availability of high speed transport and new medical techniques are just a few areas that have profoundly affected the way we live. There will be no slackening of this pace with the expansion of the microprocessor, automated production information technology and biotechnology leading to new impacts in the 1980s and beyond. Successful industrial countries will have to embrace these technologies to prosper and to survive against fierce competition.

Britain has a long record of innovative skill and has many notable "firsts" to its credit — float glass, semi-synthetic penicillin and cephalosporins, non persistent herbicides and synthetic pyrethroids, procion dyes and scanning electron microscopes are examples from the past. We fully intend that this record will continue and we shall need, as will all countries, to adjust to the changes that the new technologies will bring.

The microprocessor will lead to rapid changes in areas as diverse as children's toys and process control for chemical plants. Its low cost makes possible applications in a wide range of industrial systems such as computer aided design, robotic technology and general automation. The objectives are higher productivity, better working conditions and better quality control. British companies are aware of these opportunities and are developing both new products and better methods of making existing products.

Major developments are to be expected in information and communications. The British Post Office has developed the Prestel system which will make information from data banks widely available to organisations and individuals and Switzerland, along with other countries, is evaluating the pilot trial software.

The System X electronic exchange, recently exhibited in Geneva, will improve the reliability and capability of the telecommunications system. The novel technology of fibre optics where the message is encoded on to a laser beam and transmitted along thin glass fibre will be used to increase the capacity of the system. Several countries, including Britain, already have trial links in operation.

Britain and Switzerland as members of the European Space Agency are involved in the development of satellites for communications and other applications such as remote sensing of earth resources and weather conditions.

There is worldwide interest in biotechnology or the application of micro-organisms on an industrial scale. Brewing and wine-making are examples that have sustained man and improved the quality of his life for thousands of years. They can be confidently expected to survive the decade but there will be new applications of the technology to alcohol for fuel, protein for food, vaccines and antibiotics. Where the economics are favourable these applications will grow in the 1980s.

The problems of energy are very much to the forefront of our minds at the moment. But looking to the longer term, to the next century, one major potential source of energy is thermonuclear fusion. The path to the development of a commercial fusion reactor will be long, difficult and expensive, but the reward promises to be considerable if success is achieved. It is not a task which can be undertaken by any one country in isolation. The European Community has for over 20 years co-ordinated a very substantial fusion programme of work being done in national laboratories. We were pleased that in 1978 Switzerland decided to associate its fusion programme with that of the Community.

The UK has played a full and active part. Not only do we have at Culham one of the world's foremost fusion laboratories but we are also proud to host the Joint European Torus project which is the centrepiece of the European effort. JET, in which Switzerland is participating, is progressing well. It is now under construction. The experimental programme which is planned to start in 1983 should provide important information to guide us in the next stages of fusion research.

Energy will continue to be a problem in the eighties, not just for Western industrialised nations — but for the world as a whole. This problem is exacerbated by two factors — man's insatiable demand for more energy, and the difficulty in finding and bringing onstream new sources of supply. The solution would seem to lie in moderating the demand for energy and at the same time developing new energy sources.

Conservation has an important role to play in solving the energy problem. What is more, it now makes economic sense for the consumer to conserve in these days of dear energy. I understand that the maximum potential saving from conservation using existing technology could be as high as 30 per cent.

There is also great potential, as far as conservation is concerned, in terms of the recycling of waste and in a process known as anaerobic digestion. This process, besides supplying new energy sources, is also of importance in reducing pollution. For instance, sewage sludges, farm and other agricultural wastes, can be rendered less

harmful to the environment since by digestion they are "stablised". The basic advantages of anaerobic digestion are enormous. Besides producing methane gas from animal wastes, microbes are also produced in a digester and these are an excellent supplement for animal and fish food. The microbes residue also has an improved fertilizer value compared to the original material and so can be used on the land.

Apart from huge deposits of sewage and animal slurry Britain has vast resources of coal — not just on land, but also under the North Sea. New technologies for mining and utilising this valuable resource are being developed. Similarly, with offshore oil and gas, the fields of the future are likely to be in deeper waters and the technologists' ingenuity will be stretched to the limit.

Research into existing and new energy technologies is important if we are to have a secure energy future in the eighties and beyond and this calls for closer international co-operation, not just in R and D but also in the economic and social fields.

The environment and the quality of life generally will be important considerations in the decade ahead, and Britain will continue to work with her friends towards safeguarding these vital elements of a worthwhile life.

And how heartwarming it is to be amongst friends in a country with which Britain has cordial and friendly ties, built up over many years. I feel sure that those ties will be further strengthened and cemented later this year when The Queen is due to pay a state visit to Switzerland. I know that both my parents are greatly looking forward to this visit and if today is anything to go by I cannot help feeling that they will be enormously touched by the warmth of your hospitality.

FOR THE GARDENER

MECONOPSIS (Himalayan Poppy) Hardy herbaceous annuals, biennials and perennials.

They like any good garden soil, but are happiest in light gritty soils in a sunny position. This is with the exception of the specie *baileyi* which prefers a shady, moist position.

The annuals and biennials are propogated by seed sown in March, whilst perennials are increased by either seeding or division of roots.

All species benefit from feeds of liquid manures during the flowering season. In some cases it can be as long as 3 years before flowering rhythm is established.

Species:

M. cambrica (Welsh Poppy): only really perennial variety. The single type seed profusely and can overcrowd other plants. The double kind does not seed nearly so much. Generally a good border and rock plant.

M. aculeata: Has bright green leaves with silvery hairs and blue flowers.

Baileyi: A more recent introduction from Tibet. Has beautiful Cambridge Blue flowers with golden stamens in the centre.

There are other species available and the range varies in growing heights from 2 ft. to 5 ft. Colourings range through light blue to purple.

MECONOPSIS BAILEYI

Illustration by H. J. Thomson