



Planning for Permanence: the Speeches of J.C. Nichols
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Latin America Beckons to Industry of the Midwest

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The Middle West must become foreign trade conscious. Pacific coast cities are alive to potentialities of greater growth as a result of selling their products throughout the world, and some forty percent of their manufacturings go into foreign trade. The same is true of Houston and other southern cities. Foreign trade has played a tremendous part in building the big industrial centers on the Atlantic coast.

In this great area known as the Middle West, we are so far removed from ocean transportation that our ideas have become dormant upon the subject of foreign trade and the possibilities of industrial expansion it offers. We have depended too largely on agriculture, and now after suffering from a six years' drought, find our growth has been adversely affected.

The recent Latin America Trade Conference held in Kansas City, surprised all of us when we learned the number of factories in Kansas City and this surrounding region that are already doing a little foreign business. Many of these manufacturers told us that they realized only too well they were not beginning to take advantage of the opportunity offered. Many of them admitted they had done nothing to produce this foreign trade, but had taken orders that had come to them. Very few of them have assigned anyone in their organizations to study intricacies and complexities of foreign trade. Evidently not many of them are making any study as to the buying power of foreign countries of the products they are making, or that are being made here in the Middle West.

This trade conference developed the fact that we are one of the few regions in the entire United States without some organization of exporters working together to expand foreign trade and to be mutually helpful. New York City has a most powerful foreign trade organization. The Chicago district has an exporters' organization that meets monthly to exchange ideas, and they attribute much of their industrial expansion to the good work of this foreign trade group. St. Louis has a large, effective exporters' organization which meets monthly and have had excellent results.

The Department of Commerce at Washington were so impressed with the results of our Latin America Trade Conference held under the leadership of our Chamber of Commerce and it's good president, Ralph DeMotte, that they immediately assigned a new representative to their Kansas City office – Mr. William A. Galloway – to assist Mr. David I. White, the present manager in helping the manufacturers in this region to go after more foreign trade. The Department of Commerce frankly stated that this was considered the best foreign trade conference ever held in this country.

Mr. Robert Sevey, manager of the thirty-three divisional offices of the Department of Commerce scattered throughout the United States, visited Kansas City recently and became very enthusiastic as to the help his department could be to manufacturers of this region. He stated that Mr. White and Mr. Galloway are being instructed to call upon all manufacturers in Kansas City who are making products being purchased in world markets by foreign countries. These gentlemen are to sit down in the office of the industrialist, find out what information he requires, and if it cannot be supplied by the Kansas City office, they will procure it from the Washington office where more than five hundred experts are available to serve the manufacturers of the United States. It is claimed that this staff in Washington even excels the wonderful trade organization of Great Britain. Certainly every manufacturer should open his door to these representatives of the Department of Commerce who are ready and willing to render every possible assistance to manufacturers in their quest for expanding their business in foreign markets.

Mr. Sevey very frankly said that the Department of Commerce propose to make a testing, or experimental ground of the Kansas City office as to carrying information more directly to the manufacturers themselves; forming more intimate contacts with our industrialists; extending the kind of information they need, and rendering more direct and immediate service in investigating foreign markets.

It is the hope of the industrial committee of the Chamber of Commerce and Mr. T.J. Strickler, it's chairman; the Foreign Trade Committee, headed by Mr. JOZach Miller, III; and Mr. E.P. Hamlin, Industrial Commissioner of the Chamber of Commerce, that in the very near future we may be able to set up a Missouri River valley foreign trade organization which will hold regular meetings relating to exchange of ideas and valuable information for all of us.

Undoubtedly foreign trade affects every farmer in this region who grows wheat to be milled into flour; every clay bank in this part of the country which is processed into firebrick; every collector of junk iron which is fabricated into a multitude of products connecting this region with every foreign market in the world. Our rich deposits of lead and zinc, oil, gypsum, salt, coal, all spell opportunity and the great advances in chemurgical research, and the wizardry of synthetic chemistry it opens a new horizon – a new dawn – new era – for the middle west. These things all are a challenge to the hearts, the minds, and talents of the builders of this great inland empire. Even the very despised waste products on our farms may become the oasis of industries making articles to be sold throughout the world.

Thus the furrow on the farm leads to the smokestack in the city – and the smokestack in the city should lead to those majestic ocean freighters taking our products to the far-flung corners of the world!

The hand on the loom should grasp the hand on the plow! No great national prosperity can be attained as long as the very heart of our nation – its great agricultural section – suffers because of greater benefits enjoyed by the great coastal belts of the entire United States. The inequalities of freight rates must be adjusted. We must band together to put our part of America on a par with the coasts.

Since our Latin America Trade Conference a surprising number of inquiries have come from our territory as to the leadership Kansas City will undertake in developing foreign trade for the middle west. Kansas City today has an opportunity to rise to the occasion and help build industry throughout this entire agricultural area.

Such industries mean more payrolls in our cities and towns; larger consuming population for our agricultural products. Such industries mean more intensive farming with a larger population on our farms to buy the products of our industries.

Our Chamber of Commerce is wide-awake and alert to the situation. Here is an opportunity for young men to take the helm and carry on as pioneers in the building of this great Middle West industrially.

Every Chamber of Commerce in the Missouri River Valley should be circularized and asked to build up lists of all manufacturers they know who are interested, or may be interested in foreign trade.

Frequent meetings should be held bringing together these men with a common interest. The Department of Commerce have offered the use of their office and splendid staff of their Kansas City branch in the organization and welding together of manufacturing interests of the middle west.

Let us not forget that foreign trade affects every farmer, every retailer, every wholesaler, every banker, and in fact, every man, woman and child in this whole territory where factories may grow and expand and prosper. Everyone has an interest in foreign trade.

Other sections of this country are alive to the situation, and the race for commercial supremacy is keen. Will Kansas City and the Middle West compete in this race? Or, shall we sit idly by and watch the rest of the country go forward and outstrip us while we remain merely the crop raising area to feed those who are doing things?

The whole of Latin America is changing overnight, creating new opportunities in the world scramble for this trade. Our splendid railroads leading to all ports; rapid development of the Missouri River with barge service; imminent establishment of airways to southern cities, all give birth to fresh opportunity for us to do business with our good neighbors to the south. Psychologically, politically, and commercially, 'opportunity knocks' at our door. Will leaders of Kansas City and the Middle West heed? Let's have the vision and the courage to look beyond the needs of today and recognize the unlimited scope of tomorrow!

The State of Kansas has already seen the need and is setting up an industrial research board following the example of New England, Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi, California and many other coast belt regions,

The manufacturers of the Middle West are looking to Kansas City for leadership in developing foreign trade for this great interior. 416 registrations at our Latin America trade conference shows determination. The fight is on for more business for our part of the United States. Let's unfurl our banners and go forward for more industry in the Missouri River valley. Let us expand our markets to cover the globe!

The J.C. Nichols Company Records (KC106) – Speech JCN056

Arguably Jesse Clyde Nichols (1880-1950) was the single most influential individual to the development of metropolitan Kansas City. Moreover his work, ideas, and philosophy of city planning and development had far-reaching impact nationally – so much so that the Urban Land Institute has established the J.C. Nichols Prize for Visionary Urban Development to recognize a person or a person representing an institution whose career demonstrates a commitment to the highest standards of responsible development.

Nichols' objective was to “develop whole residential neighborhoods that would attract an element of people who desired a better way of life, a nicer place to live and would be willing to work in order to keep it better.” The Company under Nichols and his son, Miller Nichols (1911-), undertook such ventures as rental housing, industrial parks, hotels, and shopping centers. Perhaps the most widely recognized Nichols Company developments are the Country Club District and the Country Club Plaza Shopping Center, reportedly the first shopping area in the United States planned to serve those arriving by automobile rather than trolley car.

The J.C. Nichols Company Records (KC106) contains both personal and business files concerning J.C. Nichols' private and business life. Included are personal correspondence, family related material, and speeches and articles written by him. Business and financial files pertain to actions of the Company, including information about different developments and the securing of art objects; and printed materials produced by and about the Company.