SECTION 2 The Billboard NOVEMBER 24, 1951

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Canada's Biggies Pitch

Major Companies Aim Sales Guns At Prairie Provinces' Exhibitions

WESTERN CANADA is booming. So, too, is the importance of exhibits at fairs-exhibitions of the prairie provinces, both from the standpoint of the exhibitions and from that of major Canadian companies' intent on snaring the lion's share of potential sales.

To not a few of Canada's biggest in the industrial, manufacturing and retailing field, exhibiting at fairs in Western Canada has become a "must." The steady increase of the number of firms exhibiting at fairs bears proof of that. But the ranks of such exhibitors are expected to be swollen considerably in the immediate years ahead as the provinces boom, the exhibitions continue to grow, and as advertisers take heed of the success of other companies that exhibit at fairs.

A strong factor in the upswing in exhibiting has been the growth of the fairs themselves. They continue to enlarge, attendance-wise, and in this respect no end is in sight. Each exhibition offers to national advertisers the best, most inexpensive way for national advertisers to reach those who live in the wide, open spaces. No other place is more convenient for those who live in these areas to see, feel or hear new products. And no where else do advertisers have such a large, ready-made audience for their most effective sales approach—the eye-hand-ear pitch of on-the-spot inspection.

Exhib Interest Mounts

As interest in exhibiting has mounted, so too has attention paid to displays themselves. Accent is on compelling attention, holding it, and selling strongly.

Indications are that there will be a vastly greater accent placed upon exhibit preparation in the next few years than has been placed over the past several decades.

One reason is that the displays, like the products they are designed to sell, are becoming increasingly attractive, and thus there is keener competition than ever before for the attention of the fairgoer.

One exhibit that made a tour this year of six of Canada's major fairs may well have sparked something akin to a revolution in the display business of the prairie provinces. The display that was little short of a sensation was Little Otto, a mechanical car sponsored by one of Canada's leading advertisers, the Imperial Oil Company.

Wherever the car was shown, it plugged aisles of the display buildings as fairgoers craned their necks to see the little mechanical marvel—and, quite incidentally, of course, to learn the merits of Esso Products.

The stir Otto caused will spur both industrial displays and better display buildings, it is believed. Certainly, preparation of exhibits will be taken more seriously.

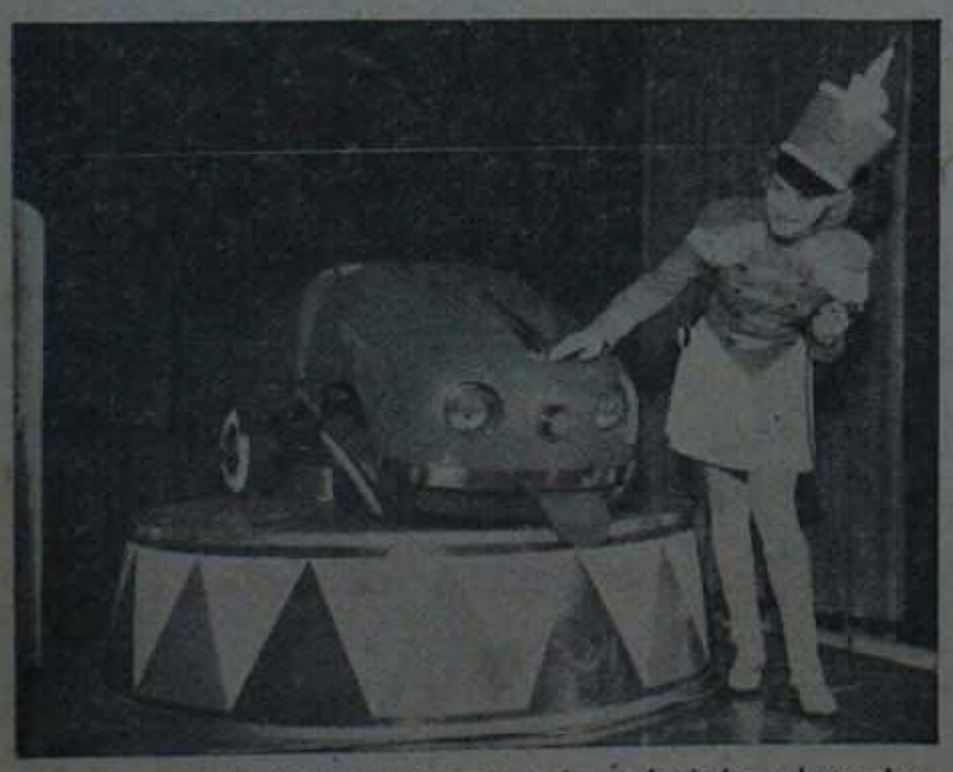
Major Displays

Now major Canadian companies, like Imperial Oil, are presenting top-flight displays and even smaller concerns indicate that they don't propose to be thrust into the backgrounds.

When Imperial Oil brought Otto to Western Canada this year, oil company execs fully expected that he would create some interest, but even the most optimistic didn't anticipate as strong a reaction from other exhibitors. That reaction reached its climax when one fair manager received complaints from other exhibitors that traffic could not get thru the display building. To keep peace with his other exhibitors, the fair exec requested Imperial to limit Otto's showings to not more than three per hour, but he admitted to The Billboard that Otto was really the best thing that had happened in his buildings since his fair began selling space, some 50 years ago.

"Certainly Otto plugs up the aisles," the manager admitted, "but if he draws a crowd to the building, then everybody is going to benefit in the long run. But more than that, Otto,

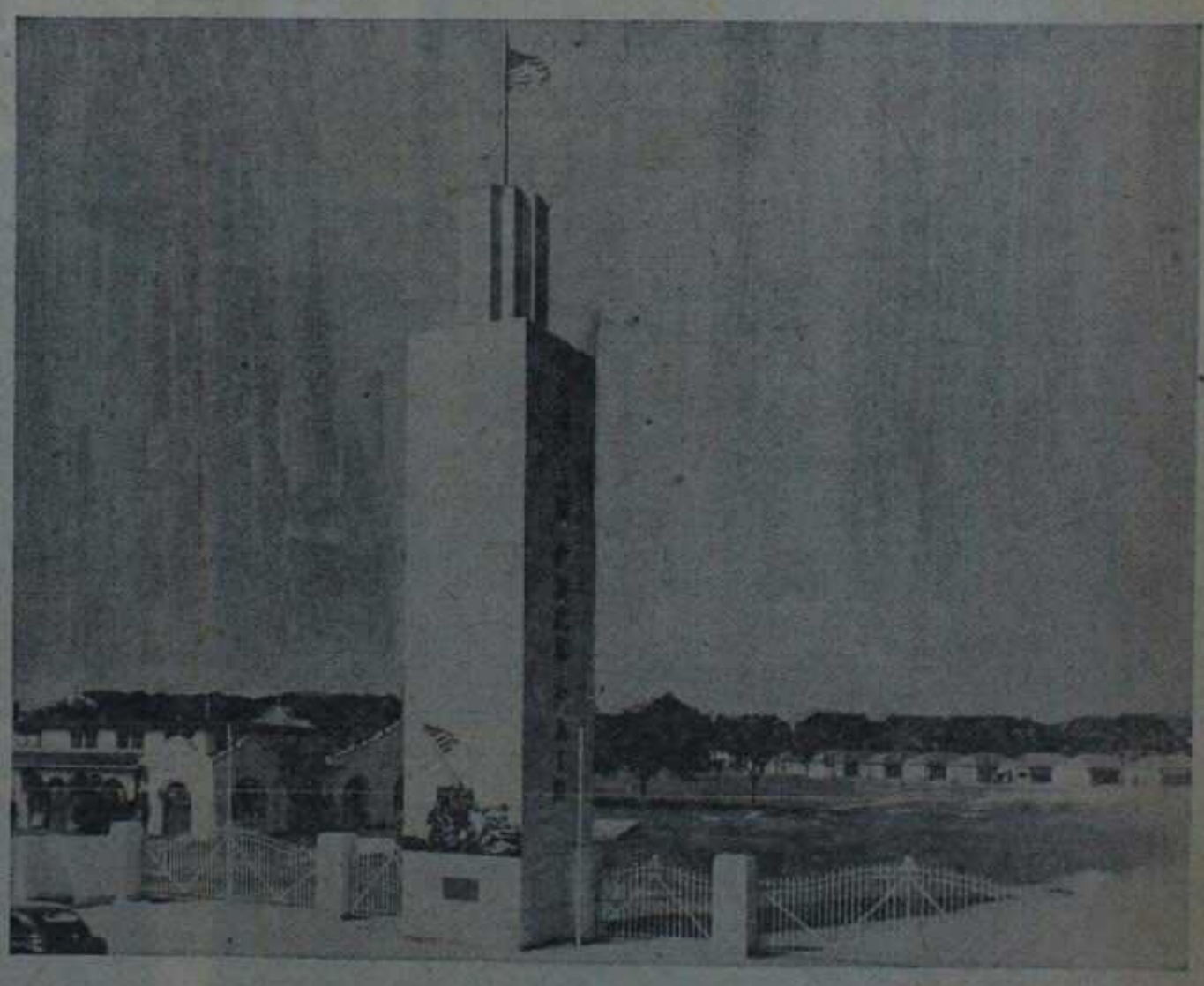
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Attention-compelling features such as Otto, the mechanical car shown above, are used by Canada's major companies in their exhibits at Western Canadian fairs. Each year a larger number of companies are finding that attractive displays pay off handsomely at exhibitions in the prairie provinces.



We can give you 500,000 reasons why an exhibit at the Kansas Free Fair should be an important part of your 1952 Sales Program . . . but here is the most important . . . Gross cash income per Kansas Farm based on Sales Management Survey is $7,196 . . . among highest average in the world.



Dedicated to the agricultural progress of Kansas. Farmers from all over the State make this their big annual event. For complete details, write

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KANSAS FREE FAIR, TOPEKA, KANSAS

AN EVENT THAT ANNUALLY DRAWS MORE PEOPLE THAN MOST STATE FAIRS

152,245

ATTENDANCE IN 1951

IN 1952 8 BIG DAYS

ALL-IOWA FAIR

In one of the Nation's Top-Ranking Cities

CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA

COME AND GET YOUR SHARE OF THE SALES

Strategically located in Iowa's most diversified market where farming and manufacturing combine to produce one of America's highest "per-capita" earning groups. Here you will find "able to buy" customers.

1952 DATES AUGUST 10 TO 17

★ Exhibit Accommodations equal to the best.

★ Outstanding Attractions daily draw top crowds.

★ Excellent Transportation . . . plenty of parking space.

For all the reasons why you should make an exhibit at the ALL-IOWA FAIR an important part of your 1952 sales program, write to:

Andy Hanson, Mgr. HAWKEYE DOWNS CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA

THE NEW MERIDIAN FAIR AND CATTLE SHOW AT BUCKWALTER STADIUM

NOW . . . THE OFFICIAL ANNUAL FAIR IN MERIDIAN, MISSISSIPPI . . . *Endorsed*

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1952 DATES—Sept. 29-Oct. 4 (tentative)

This is the NEW BIG EVENT in Mississippi . . .

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Canadian Firms Pitch at Prairies

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and a few more efforts of that caliber, will smarten up the rest of the advertisers who buy space from us. They'll have to, if they expect to compete."

This exhibition manager, who prefers to remain unnamed, expects that in the near future all of the traveling displays will have greatly improved presentations. On the Class A circuit there are nearly a dozen displays which make the Brandon-Calgary-Edmonton-Saskatoon-Regina circuit, then make the 1,000-mile hop to the Canadian Lakehead Exhibition at Port Arthur-Fort William before proceeding to the Canadian National Exhibition at Toronto. Besides Imperial Oil, others include a co-operative, The United Grain Growers, Ltd. A large Canadian investment firm, Osler, Hammond & Nanton, showed its display at three prairie exhibitions this year, for the second consecutive year, exhibiting in those cities in which the company has branch offices. Perfex, a household bleach manufacturer, shows at all exhibitions but Brandon. Several other firms pick and choose their spots, usually keeping in line with sales territories or showing only at those centers where their product is not a big seller.

Good Exhibits

Three federal government departments, Department of Agriculture, Department of Labor and a federal-controlled crown corporation, Central Mortgage & Housing Corporation, show at all six shows. The agricultural department is the grandpappy of the traveling exhibitors, having shown their artistic efforts thruout Canada for more than 30 years. They hit every spot, from country pumpkin festivals to Canada's largest, the CNE.

Most of the traveling displays have one thing in common. They are designed to catch the eye and the attention of Canadians from rural points. The reasoning is that the majority of the city-dwellers can be reached thru ads in dailies and spots on radio stations. But for the farm folk it is necessary to take a sales message to the places where the farmers and suburban dwellers congregate, namely, at fairs, exhibitions, stock sales and other promotions.

One of the principal reasons why more and more national Canadian concerns are turning to traveling displays is that personal contact can be made with huge audiences at a very low cost.

Take Little Otto for example. By showing him at the six largest shows in the prairie provinces and Northwestern Ontario, Imperial Oil has a chance to catch the attention of more than a million and a quarter fair-attenders. By actual count, 227,000 persons stopped to see the whole show. To that number of people Otto presented the bag of tricks which caused his press agent to dub him "the world's most highly educated automobile."

Otto's Story

What's Otto's story? Simply this. Imperial Oil advertising executives realized that they had to make a departure from the type of name and product presentation they had been using the past several years. Their former efforts were singularly undistinguishd.

Imperial borrowed Otto from Standard Oil of California (he was manufactured by Paul Stanley & Company of San Francisco), and installed him in a marquee-style circus tent (built by Design Craft of Toronto).

Here's how he works:

Otto is a small model car, about five feet long, two and a half feet wide. He is painted a brilliant fire-engine red and mounted on circular dias about seven feet in diameter. Powered by compressed air, Otto can perform the following stunts: Blinks his eyelids; rolls his eyes; sticks out his tongue; dances on his rear wheels; moves from side to side; bows from the waist; balances a ball on his nose; smokes a king-sized pipe, and last, but not least, talks.

Here's the pitch: The little marquee tent is closed when a recording starts a "Step right up, step right up" spiel. This announces that the greatest show on earth is about to take place. By the time the audience begins to gather, the curtains open and the show is on.

True to the traditions of show business, there is a gimmick to the Imperial Oil display. Little Otto is guided thruout his performance by one of his trainers, introduced to the audience as "Miss Esso." The trainers, Miss Margaret Johnston and Miss Barbara Michie, both of Toronto, appear from the wings in full drum majorette costumes. Altho the trainers hold a microphone and purportedly use it during the show, the mike is a dummy and the complete show comes from a record. Misses Johnston and Michie were so well practiced prior to going on the road that few, if any, of the spectators ever tumbled to the trick. Synchronization was perfect.

Dialog Perfect

The dialog does a potent selling job yet succeeds in holding interest. Otto, for instance, cannot perform at the show's opening because (or so he explains) he was out the night before and overdid things a bit by drinking some cheap gasoline. It's not until he is fortified by a tankful of Esso that his eyelids flip open and he gets down to brass tacks.

Each show takes 10 minutes and 2 seconds. Depending upon the crowd, two, three or four shows are run hourly, the perfect schedule having three, so that the operating crews can work 10 minutes on and 10 minutes off.

At fairs this year Otto operated for about 12 hours each day, 10 to 10 p.m. Two employees constituted a crew, one Miss Esso and an operator, to put Otto thru his paces. While either blonde Miss Michie or dark haired Miss Johnston were allegedly carrying on a long conversation with Otto in front of the audience, one of the operators, Maynard Robinson or Doug Baker, would be at the controls. Watching either of these men at the controls is faintly reminiscent of the proverbial one-armed paperhanger. To rotate Otto on his axis, they

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