[recording begins abruptly]

[Unknown speaker]: ... an upright person that Mr. Douglas feels the then Chief Factor welcomed the idea of colonial government being established where he had been able to be the supreme dictator. But the fact that British rule was going to be established because it gave the Hudson's Bay a sense of security, because the ambitions of a few people from south of the border, uh, found that the presence of British sailors here was an effective check to any of those further ambitions. But it also sounded the death knell of the monopoly which the Hudson's Bay Company had for the trading privileges here.

Well, the present governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, Lord Amory, comes from that wonderful county of Devon in the south of England where his family had been associated for many years. Last year he was appointed governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, following a line of great administrators, and thus closely linking him with Sir James Douglas [of old?], and the events which we now celebrate today and will continue to celebrate throughout this year.

Therefore, my very great pleasure to introduce to you Lord Amory, governor of the Hudson’s Bay Company.

[applause]

Lord Amory: My first visit to Victoria [was almost 40 and 3 years?] ago, and if there's anything any of you would like to hear about British Columbia in those early days, I shall be glad of course to [laughter] [tell you?]. I went hunting, and today uh a mounted rams head bears testimony tribute to my [prowess?] of those days. It's getting rather dim now, and I'm almost beginning to think that, in fact, on that occasion, I arrived by canoe down the Fraser River. [laughter] Give me a little more time and that is what I shall, uh [laughter] think.

But I also would like to recall the very happy memories I have of the two years and a quarter that I had the honour of being British High Commissioner in Ottawa. During that time I got an opportunity visiting all parts of this great country, and I met and made acquaintance with a large number of Canadians and it's been a joy to me to remember those days.

I've been thinking back- When I read those newspapers this morning, I just anxiously thought back to the dates I had been in Ottawa, and I- [enthusiastic, extended laughter] and I was glad to find that it was all [rot?]. [laughter] It was all over before I arrived. And anyhow, to a shy young bachelor like myself, if I had given a ring I would have remembered it vividly. [more extended laughter]

4:16

Now, Your Honour Mr. Premier, our company - now within four years of its tercentenary - is immensely proud of its long and I think constructive association with this famous province. We feel our roots are very deep in soil of British Columbia, and I would like to assure you that it is our strong desire to continue, and to strengthen further, our active links with the province. And to participate in the future as we have in the past; in the tremendous growth that clearly lies ahead. All our policies are directed to that end.
Your Honour, when I placed your kind invitation to me before our board of directors, it obtained our instant and enthusiastic approval. They reflected on those, um, mutually rewarding days when responsibility to this country was shared in the productive partnership of Crown and Company. They recall too, with wistful memory, of the great day in eighteen hundred and forty-nine [1849] when the Hudson's Bay Company received a grant of the whole of Vancouver Island. [laughter] And they recall, with quite a poignant feeling of melancholy, the 3rd of April, 1867, when the Island was reconveyed to the Crown. [laughter]

It occurred in a flash to my intelligent colleagues, ever watchful of the welfare of humanity in general and the interests of our proprietors in particular, that, uh, peradventure Her Majesty's present administration in British Columbia had thought that it would be a nice local gesture, on this happy occasion, to restore the status quo [interim?] [laughter and applause cuts into speech] [not?]. [more applause]

It is true that a part of the bargain on that occasion, uh, the Company was induced to undertake as well the management of the government, including responsibility for public works, law enforcements, education, and welfare. The Company thought, in their innocence, that as fur traders they had the experience of every kind of trouble known to the human race, and accepted the terms.

In the next few years, they and their Chief Factor learned what, uh, must seem incredible to you, Mr. Premier and your [two?] distinguished colleagues, that political government is not always just a bed roses. [chuckling] Nevertheless, so deep is sense of public duty of my colleagues, that they have authorized me to say, Your Honour Mr. Premier, that, um, in the event of our company being once more entrusted with the government of Vancouver Island, we should be prepared instantly to restore the Medical Officer, the schoolmaster, the chaplain, and the police force, formed from retired Hudson's Bay employees. [laughter] In fact the whole apparatus of administration precisely as it existed in 1849.

One of the happiest arrangements, for the Hudson's Bay Company at any rate, was the combination for some years of the function of Governor of Vancouver Island and Chief Factor of the Hudson's Bay Company. Perhaps in this case, Your Honour, there is a precedent worth repeating. Another excellent precedent, surely, was established when our Chief Factor, James Douglas, had the happy thought of charging every entrant to British Columbia a $2 head tax, which that tax was paid instantly into the kitty of the Hudson's Bay Company. [laughter] In fact the whole apparatus of administration precisely as it existed in 1849.

It was in that remarkable man, James Douglas, that a cooperation between the Crown and the Company was most romantically personified. First as a young clerk, and then as Chief Factor, and then as Governor and Chief Factor combined, and finally as Governor of Vancouver Island and the mainland united as the Colony of British Columbia. He served our own Company and his country with steadfast loyalty and devotion, and outstanding ability.

It was not, perhaps, always plain sailing as you, Your Honour, hinted just now. On one occasion, Governor [Richard?] Blanshard decided that Chief Factor Douglas had exceeded his authority. He haled him into court and had him convicted, but alas, Governor Blanshard had neither constable nor jail. It was his practice on such occasions to ask Hudson's Bay Company kindly to accommodate the felon in their fort, and to appoint one of their servants to guard him. On this occasion, uh, where James Douglas was the felon, this admirably practical arrangement broke down. [laughter] Chief Factor Douglas, who was in charge of the fort, declined to provide either jail or jailer. [laughter]
I rather think you are right, Your Honour, and James Douglas was a little perhaps impatient of the His Honour of the day, and I very much doubt whether Governor Blanshard would have offered the Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company a hot bath and drink, as you did me this evening. [chuckling]

Professor Walter Sage, speaking on the occasion of the unveiling of the tablet in Parliament Buildings in Victoria, to the memory of Sir James Douglas said, "In Douglas there was a certain kind of greatness. He towered over his contemporaries. If it had not been for his strong, wise, though at times stern, rule, British Columbia and Vancouver Island might never have survived the storms and stresses of their earlier years, and our company holds his memory in the highest honour."

12:04
Alexander Mackenzie, Simon Fraser, David Thompson, George Simpson, James Douglas - what courage, tenacity, and resolution those names stand for. We marvel today at their achievements, and you and we are the heirs of their heroism.

When Alexander Mackenzie arrived at Bella Coola in seventeen hundred and ninety-three [1793], he was the first white man to cross the North American continent north of Mexico. He came as a representative of the North West Company, as did Fraser and Thompson a decade or so later.

In 1821, the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company combined. It's significant to recall that when the Board of the Hudson's Bay Company in London decided to send one of their members out to Canada to finalize this merger, they chose an individual who was described in their report as "The only single man on the Board of Direction". [audience chuckles]

13:20
This habit, Your Honour, of selecting a bachelor for these missions of danger, it seems to have persisted to the present day. [laughter] Our Company are proud that so many of their trading posts established in British Columbia in those early days have become fine cities, and that in their development our Company have, over all the intervening years, a continuous record of service in British Columbia.

In anticipation of your generous hospitality tonight, I was reading the record of a dinner provided in honour of our visiting representative in British Columbia in the year 1822. I quote, "There was an abundance of bear and beaver meat, bear and salmon oil, berry cakes and berries of different kinds, dry cod roes, and salmon roes that had been put under ground in the state in which they were taken out of the fish and being now reduced to a jelly, and may be called the quintessence of putrefaction." [laughter]

Well now my, uh, colleagues at home will be eagerly awaiting the report I give them of the [laughter] uh, superb entertainment you have offered me this evening. I was also reading about the early days of our Company's existence in British Columbia. Our Commissioned Gentlemen, as they were called, were always referred to as Mister by superiors as well as subordinates.

15:15
Our Chief Factor always wore a dark frock coat, with a tartan cloak in auspicious weather, surmounted by a beaver hat with an oiled silk topper. I will do better next time when I come; [chuckling] I didn't select this bit of information quite in time.

I'm sure when he started or returned from a journey he was accorded a salute from the Fort. And so, Your Honour, now that I've dropped that hint, something could be laid on in future [laughter] in that direction.
He presided, our Chief Factor that is, at the head of the mess table where no frivolous discussion was tolerated, and it's said that the books that the Hudson's Bay Company sent out with their annual ship was selected for the informative works. There was no trash. Lady Chatterley's Lover would not have stood a chance [chuckling] of getting through in those days.

This discipline and austere spirit is strictly maintained today, [chuckling] and explains why it is impossible for me to address this distinguished company tonight in other than a deeply serious vein.

One cannot refer to those early days without paying a tribute to that gallant old paddle steamer, the S.S. Beaver. Launched on the Thames in 1835, she reached the Columbia River after a passage of 163 days. She then served the Hudson's Bay Company for no less than 39 years, and other employers for a further 14 before she ended her honourable career of over half a century when, I believe, she ran aground on the point of the entrance to Vancouver Harbour.

There's one other thing, Premier, I ought perhaps to say and that is how glad I am that I'm speaking before you and not after you. If I had been speaking after you, I fancy you might have asked me a question, "When is the Hudson's Bay Company coming to Canada?"

And I don't know what I should have said. I said it reminded me of the days from the House of Commons when I was asked questions. I think I should've given you the sort of answer I remember a Minister in the House of Commons giving once when he had a question and he wasn't sure what the answer was, too. And he said, "The answer to the question the Honourable Gentleman has asked is: partly in the affirmative and partly in the negative." [laughter]

And the Honourable Gentleman leapt to his feet and said, "Yes!" but also "It was all very well for the Minister to say that; which part is in the affirmative and which is in the negative?"

The Minister said, "That is the question that I feel I can leave with the utmost confidence to the innate intelligence to the Honourable Gentlemen." [laughter]

I don't think that that would have, uh, been good enough for the Premier. [laughter]

Mr. Premier, nearly 200 years ago, one of our Chief Factors wrote gloomily home to our Head Office. He wrote, "Last year the Canadians, having traded four out of six canoes made for your service, [William Tomison?] ordered your cypher to be marked on the thwart of the canoe builded this year."

I have here, Mr. Premier, a canoe builded by one Benjamin Smith in the year 1830. He built it of silver gilt. As it doesn't bear the cypher of the Hudson's Bay Company on its thwart, our directors felt would best be placed in safe hands before the Canadians have a chance of trading it. [laughter]

I ask you therefore, Mr. Premier, if you will accept this canoe as a symbol of the pride and gratitude that our company feels that it has been our privilege to have participated in the historic events we are celebrating today, and to accept too our heartfelt good wishes for the challenging days that lie ahead.

[applause]
[Premier Bennett?]: The beacon—A beacon fire is used to announce events of great import. Before me is a torch which shortly I shall light. From this banquet room it will be carried by special runner to a barge anchored in the inner harbour, on which a bonfire has been prepared.

And I've lighted a few bonfires in my time [laughter and applause]. Before me is a torch [recording fades out]

[End of recording]