



*Forward
From*

MILLION

BY
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Forward From Fifty Million

On the occasion celebrating the
production of 50 Million Cars by
General Motors in the United States

FLINT, MICHIGAN

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This is a momentous occasion.

I wonder if you fully realize just how momentous it is—and how significant.

Fifty million cars built in this country by General Motors since 1908.

That's more cars than any other country or any combination of other countries has ever produced. It's a production feat that surpasses anything ever achieved by any other industrial organization. The Golden Car on the stage behind me symbolizes a milestone unique in the world's industrial history.

To me this celebration is far more significant than any anniversary—even one of 100 years, significant as that may be. As I told the men at the Chevrolet plant this morning, an anniversary marks the passage of a certain length of time without relation to what has been done. In contrast, the production of 50 million cars and trucks has been a positive accomplishment.

The production of 50 million cars has also been a team accomplishment. The 50 millionth car happens to be a Chevrolet, put together in Flint. But the team it represents goes far beyond Chevrolet, far beyond Flint and far beyond General Motors.

A great many people and a great many businesses all

over America have had a part in this great industrial achievement—and likewise shared in its benefits.

I would like to emphasize the sharing of benefits particularly. When some people use the terms profit and loss, they seem to imply profits for some, losses for others. They would have you believe that a profit for the buyer means a loss for the seller and vice versa. Or that when the shareholder profits, somebody else loses.

Benefits Are Shared

Actually, the distinguishing feature of our system is that benefits are shared—and by all parties to any transaction or in any operation. When a business earns a profit and prospers, all who have contributed to its growth prosper.

Who are the groups that have contributed to the production of 50 million General Motors cars and shared the benefits of this great accomplishment?

First, we have the many thousands of employes, not only of Chevrolet, but of each of the other car and truck divisions—Cadillac, Buick, Oldsmobile, Pontiac and GMC Truck—that contributed their millions of products to make this total possible.

All Members of the Team

Then there are the many General Motors plants in

many different places that make components and parts for cars and trucks. The non-automotive divisions, too, make a contribution and receive benefits, because the strength of General Motors derives in large measure from the strength of all its parts.

Highly important as members of the team are our 18,000 dealers. Cars can only be produced about as fast as they are sold to customers. Without sales, production stops. Furthermore, two used cars have to be sold for each new car sale. Thus, the production of 50 million new cars actually meant about one hundred and fifty million sales.

Four hundred and ninety thousand shareholders have made a most vital contribution, too, because it has been their savings and reinvested earnings that have provided the plants and tools. They have received substantial benefits over the years in dividends and in the great growth in value of their investments.

We have 21,000 suppliers who are all part of the team, together with their employes and also the firms which serve them as *their* suppliers. In fact, the supplier chain goes all the way back to the producers of basic raw materials from the mine, the forest and the farm.

Another contribution—and one that is not perhaps so obvious—has been that made by other businesses, no matter what their product, no matter where located.

It has taken the cumulative efforts of all businesses, each one adding its bit to the goods produced by others, to raise our national wealth and our national standard of living to the level where we have had a market for 50 million General Motors cars.

The Most Important Contributor

Which brings me to our most important contributor—and beneficiary—without whom no company can ever survive for long.

At one time or another some 2700 different makes of cars were put on the market. Today a bare handful of those original 2700 survive. The others have vanished. Why? Primarily because their products did not have sufficient appeal to this one person of whom I now speak—the *customer*.

I realize that to many of us the customer may seem far removed from our daily work. He is not, I assure you. He holds the ballot which controls our products and our very jobs. His vote assures the continued acceptance of a product. Conversely, if he withholds his vote, not only is the product voted out of business, but the company along with it and its employees too.

In General Motors we have been successful in winning the votes of customers primarily because we have constantly striven to build greater values into our prod-

ucts. Our slogan has been, "More and Better Things for More People." It is to the extent that we have lived up to that slogan that we have prospered. It is to the extent that we continue to live up to that slogan that we shall continue to prosper.

And others with us. Because it has been the jobs generated by the production of 50 million General Motors cars that have helped create markets for every variety of product and have been a potent force in generating and insuring an expanding economy.

GM Home Towns

This interplay of productive forces has had a profound effect on community life all over America—and particularly on the General Motors "home towns" to whom I have the honor of speaking.

Each of you has made a contribution to our production record, and General Motors, in turn, has been a factor in your growth.

I am most familiar with the story here in Flint because Flint has been my home for more than 40 years.

Flint will be 100 years old next year. It is a typical, dynamic American city—a worthy representative of all our plant cities. At times it has had rough going. But each time it has recovered and moved ahead.

First, it was a lumber town. When the forests receded,

it began to make buggies. And even before the buggy vanished, it had turned to automobiles. In recent years, it has grown and prospered mightily.

General Motors is happy to have contributed—through its own growth—to Flint's growth and prosperity. We recognize, too, that the support of the citizens of Flint has had a great deal to do with the growth and prosperity of General Motors.

A Good Citizen

Further than that, we recognize that in Flint and in our other plant cities we have an obligation that transcends our role as an employer of men and a producer of products. It is our earnest endeavor to be a good citizen of our plant communities and to assume the duties and responsibilities that good citizenship imposes.

Let me cite an example.

This city of Flint is a great industrial center. It has, as I say, grown rapidly. Flint also has a most active and progressive cultural life. However, the natural development of this life has been handicapped somewhat by inadequate physical facilities. They have not kept pace with the growth of the city.

Recognizing this, Flint's community leaders have launched a cultural center development program. It is under way and receiving the widest possible community

support as a centennial year project.

General Motors is assuming *its* citizenship responsibilities in this constructive undertaking by making a grant of \$3,000,000 toward the cost of the program.

This grant is in line with our established practice of contributing to worthwhile community projects which are advanced and given tangible support by the community at large.

Another consideration was Flint's rather unique relationship with General Motors—a relationship which also explains why we elected to have our 50 millionth car celebration here.

For one thing, Flint might be called the cradle of General Motors.

For another, there are 75,000 General Motors employes in Flint—more than in any other plant city. They constitute a larger percentage of the working force than in any other plant city. Flint is the home of Buick and AC Spark Plug. Chevrolet and Fisher Body also have their largest employment concentrated here.

Vision in 1908

It was the vision of a bare handful of men here in Flint back in 1908 when the automobile industry was a struggling infant that launched General Motors. It was the vision of a few others that kept General Motors

afloat when financial weather became stormy.

In other companies that same vision was manifest—vision of the automobile both as an essential means of transportation and as a creator of jobs. The result has been the development of an industry—and I am sure you share this belief—that makes the greatest single contribution of any to the strength of the national economy. Over the years it has constituted a principal source of our country's dynamic growth.

Today the automobile can put 163 million people on the road at one time—with the back seats empty.

Today everything we eat and wear and use travels at some stage by motor vehicle.

Today the automotive and highway transport industries provide employment for almost 10 million people directly and many millions more indirectly.

All the product of vision.

Vision has characterized our industry in other ways too—the ability to look ahead and anticipate the customer's wants, to keep building ever greater values into our products to make them more desirable and within the reach of all.

A People on Wheels

The Golden Car is a symbol of that vision—of the spectacular progress in design and engineering over the

years since 1908. You saw six cars outside as you came in, representing six milestones in General Motors history. The comparison between Car No. 50,000,000 and Car No. 25,000,000, for example, is so obvious that it needs no restating here.

However, the impact of 50 million General Motors cars on our country is certainly not so obvious—in fact, quite generally taken for granted without thought of what it really means.

Fifty million cars, as I say, have put a substantial proportion of our people on wheels—given them an individualized means of transportation possessed by no other people on earth. This has had a profound effect on our customs, our habits, our entire way of life.

Fifty million cars have not only provided jobs for many hundreds of thousands of men and women both in our own plants and in those of our suppliers and in the mines and on the farms. They have also generated millions of jobs that never existed before—in dealerships, in the trucking industry, in service stations and in many other businesses too numerous to mention.

And, of greatest importance, the organization and the facilities with which 50 million General Motors cars have been produced have rendered outstanding service to our country in time of need in the production of weapons for war and defense.

Symbol of Progress

So far I have talked of this 50 Millionth Car as a symbol of accomplishment to date. But most importantly, it stands as a symbol of progress for the future.

That there will be progress and amazing progress, have no doubt. We are already engaged in a great technological revolution. New products, new processes are coming off the drawing boards of the engineers and out of the laboratories of the scientists at an ever faster pace.

General Motors is making its contribution to this advance at our great new Technical Center. From it as well as from the engineering departments of our divisions are coming an increasing flow of new developments in research, engineering, process development and styling.

Another dynamic factor contributing to the progress of our country is population growth. Within the next 20 years it is estimated that our population will increase 35 per cent to a record 220 million.

The combination of a growing population and an expanding technology means mounting employment and a rising standard of living. General Motors will make its own substantial contribution on both counts.

Currently, our employment in the United States totals 475,000, and it will be substantially increased

between now and January 1. Employment generally continues at record levels with unemployment declining. The national economy, having stabilized last summer, now is showing an upward trend. I am optimistic about business in general for the next calendar year. In 1955 automobile production could well be 10 per cent above 1954. That would mean passenger car production in the neighborhood of 5,800,000 units for the domestic market—a good year for the automobile industry.

A Good Year

This, of course, means a good year for General Motors. I am sure you have seen the new Cadillacs, Buicks, Oldsmobiles, Pontiacs and Chevrolets which have just been introduced for 1955. And I am sure you recognize that each line represents the greatest advances in engineering, styling and value for the dollar that we have ever offered. With such outstanding lines of cars, 1955 should be another good year for General Motors dealers, for General Motors suppliers, for all the men and women in the General Motors family and for the communities in which they live.

For us in General Motors the 50 millionth car stands as a milestone along our path of progress. It represents a momentous accomplishment. It marks one stage of a

journey whose extent is limited only by our vision, our capabilities and our capacity to serve.

It should inspire us to even greater achievements in the future. I am sure that it will and that the day is not far distant when we shall be celebrating General Motors' 100 millionth car.

At this Thanksgiving time it is fitting that, in company with other Americans, we pause to give thanks, not alone for the manifold blessings enjoyed by us as individuals and by our great country, but also for the magnificent opportunities that can be glimpsed along the road ahead.