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Special Edition

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THE BIG DRIVE STARTS NOW

Message from Sir Donald Stokes, Deputy Chairman, Managing Director and Chief Executive of British Leyland Motor Corporation



ON Tuesday, 14th May, 1968, we all become members of The British Leyland Motor Corporation. This is the only major British-owned Motor Manufacturer and represents Britain's last chance to stand up to and fight the formidable competition of American and other motor manufacturers. We are, of course, also the largest motor manufacturer in Great Britain and one of the largest companies in the country, and the success that attends our efforts may well set the pattern for industry in this country for many years to come.

By British standards we are big, we employ close to 200,000 people throughout the world, and have total sales of over £800 million a year but, large as this may sound to us, it is only one-tenth the size of the giant General Motors and we will still be a David tackling the American Goliath.

In order to match the resources that our competitors have, we have got to provide energy, enthusiasm and imagination to an unprecedented degree.

The major reason for the merger was not just getting big for the sake of it. There is no particular virtue in size as such, but with the growing competition in the international world in which we live today, the emphasis is on modern automated plant with vast supporting technological and research facilities giving the ability to design and produce at very competitive prices motor cars, motor trucks and motor buses so that we can sell on price, quality and specification anywhere in the world. In order to make them we need vast amounts of money behind us to purchase the factories and the machine tools. At home and overseas we need the most effective marketing organisation, coupled with top grade after-sales service facilities. No matter how effective we were as individual operating companies, we were too small, too fragmented, to give the service which the customer all over the world demands today.

I think we are all very proud of the company for which we work—we have a pride in the job that we do, and a loyalty to our own particular Group. Every effort is going to be made to maintain this spirit, but at the same time, we must look for greater enthusiasm and loyalty to British Leyland as a whole because it is on the success of the Group as a whole that the future prosperity and happiness of all of us depends.

As I see it we have three duties—first to our customers, to see that we provide them with cars, trucks and buses that are acceptable and reliable, with an inbuilt quality that makes them well worth the money that has been spent to purchase them. Quality control lies in the hands of every one of us and people won't come back for our products and ensure us continuity of employment unless we give them a square deal.

Our sales people have got to market the products in a competitive way and our service staff, distributors and agents all over the world have got to provide quick and efficient service.

Secondly our policy will be to provide fair and adequate working conditions for everybody in the Corporation. In any merger of this size there are bound to be changes and adjustments and in certain instances the re-alignment of manufacturing facilities. Every effort will be made to keep

you informed, through the appropriate channels, of any impending moves, once they have been decided, and in making these decisions we will maintain the close contact that we have with the Union leaders and Shop Stewards in all the various plants.

I want British Leyland to be a place where everybody is proud to work and a place where equally work-people are proud of the products that come off the line. This is a joint responsibility of employees at all levels and management at all levels.

Finally, we have to consider the shareholders. They are the people who put up the money and took the risk in the first place to get the plant established at all. Who are these shareholders? They are not, as some imagine, a group of tycoons, but they comprise well over 200,000 individual people just like you and me who have invested their savings in our company in order to provide work for us to enable us to expand and in the reasonable hope that they will get a fair return on the money they have invested. We have an obligation to see that their faith in us is not misplaced.

The complete integration of The British Leyland Motor Corporation will take some years to achieve. We intend to aim for a sensible degree of rationalisation throughout the Group, concentrating our efforts with the idea of avoiding unnecessary duplication and giving us a far sharper cutting edge in the challenging world markets.

It is planned to have a Volume Car Division, Specialist Car Division, Truck and Bus Division, Construction Equipment Division, General Engineering and Foundries Division, and an Overseas Division together with central staff functions which will assist me in planning and controlling the Corporation as a whole and will provide marketing, financial, technical research and other services which we will now be in a position to concentrate instead of having them dissipated over innumerable individual companies.

Obviously at this stage I cannot go into greater detail as to how we are going to achieve all these objectives. We have much planning and research to do but already we have been able to implement a considerable number of moves which makes us a much more effective fighting force as of now. I use the word fighting deliberately because as a Group we are fighting for our very existence to ensure our survival and to avoid domination by foreign groups.

Finally, a word to the younger people in our Companies. You are now at the beginning of a revolutionary change in this major industrial Group. The opportunities before you are immense, because apart from the technological resources behind us the training facilities of this Group for young people today are second to none in the country, and the management and staff courses open to all, dependent only on your ability, offer you an unrivalled chance of promotion throughout the major plants in the United Kingdom and also at other manufacturing centres which are owned by us throughout the world. We need as many young people with ambition as we can get. As far as the older people are concerned, I hope you will recognise what we are trying to achieve and give us the support of your mature skills and experience in our efforts to provide stability of employment and good working conditions for as many people as we possibly can."

