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RECORDS OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR UNITED STATES-CHINA TRADE 1973-1983



This collection documents the formation of the National Council for United States-China Trade and its role in the development of U.S.-China trade, and the Council's library holdings relating to China's trade and economy. The Council is an association of U.S. business firms interested in trade with the People's Republic of China. It was formed in 1973 with the encouragement of the U.S. Government.

Date Range: 1973-1983

Content: 73,923 images

Source Library: Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library

Detailed Description:

The National Council for United States-China Trade (NCUSCT) was formed in 1973 to promote and facilitate trade between the United States and the People's Republic of China. Although trade between the two countries had resumed on June 10, 1971, after a 22 year hiatus, the impetus for a trade council came from President Nixon's visit to China in February 1972. At the end of the visit a joint communiqué was issued in Shanghai. Addressing the issue of trade, the communiqué stated, "Both sides view bilateral trade as another area from which mutual benefit can be derived, and agreed that economic relations based on equality and mutual benefit are in the interest of the people of the two countries. They agree to facilitate the progressive development of trade between their two countries." The National Council became the facilitator for the United States.

Scope of the Records

The collection consists of NCUSCT records arranged into two sub-groups: administrative files and Business Advisory Services Department files. While the internal structure and staff of the Council changed, the major activities of the Council remained within the compass of these file groups. [This publication does not include the materials from the Delegations Department files and Publications and Research Department files due to privacy and copyright concerns.]

In addition to being a source of information about the history and work of the NCUSCT and the development of US-China trade in general, the files have research value in several other

areas. Specific aspects of trade such as shipping, packaging, contract negotiations, banking, inspection, and trademarks are documented. The files also have material relating to US-China relations in general, China's trade with other countries, and China's history, culture, and business practices. Briefing materials, texts of speeches from conferences, notes and minutes from meetings, packets prepared for meetings, and trip reports are good sources for research on the subjects highlighted above.

The files contain material relating to routine matters such as working papers for planning itineraries and making arrangements for special events. The files also include printed materials such as annual reports and brochures from businesses and organizations, and publications on laws, regulations, and legislation affecting trade.

While certain items are dated as recently as 1983, the bulk of the records are from 1973 through 1978. They cover the time from establishment of liaison offices and creation of the Council to the announcement on December 15, 1978, that the United States and China would normalize diplomatic relations on the first of January 1979.

Publishers Note: Following the Historical Description is additional detailed information on the contents of this collection.

Historical Description

Creation and Membership

Full support for the formation of the Council was given by the White House and the Departments of State and Commerce. The Department of Commerce took the lead in the organizational effort, and Secretary Frederick B. Dent recruited twenty American business leaders to serve as an executive committee for the NCUSCT. The Executive Committee met in Washington on March 22, 1973, to undertake formation of the Council. An inaugural conference, attended by more than 300 business representatives, was held on May 31, 1973, and the Council was formally organized.

Members of the Executive Committee served as the first Board of Directors of the Council. Donald C. Burnham of Westinghouse Corporation, who had been Chairman of the Executive Committee, became the first Chairman of the Board. The Board elected Christopher H. Phillips, U.S. Deputy Representative to the United Nations, to be the president and executive director of the Council. Washington attorney Eugene A. Theroux served the Council first as a consultant and then as vice president. He was instrumental during the formative stages of the Council in developing programs and policies.

Although founded with the support and encouragement of the Government, the Council is a private, non-profit organization supported by membership dues. It was formed and is operated entirely by its members. Membership in the Council was open to firms interested in export or import business with China. About 200 companies joined the Council during the first year of its existence. By July 1982 membership had grown to about 400 companies.

Programs and Services

Several programs were implemented to encourage trade, all with an emphasis on providing practical assistance to member companies. The Council provided advice and consultations for member firms, sponsored seminars and conferences, and conducted a program for exchanges of trade delegations. Translation services were offered until 1978, when that department was spun-off into an independent company.

Member firms were organized into importer and exporter committees, and Council staff worked with these committees to facilitate trade in specific product areas.

In order to promote the dissemination of commercial information, the Council published a bimonthly magazine, *The China Business Review* (which has not been included in this collection). Handbooks, directories, special sector reports, and other materials were also produced. The Council was a clearinghouse for information on all aspects of China's trade and economy, and its library housed a complete collection of journals, trade statistics, and a reference file of clippings from around the world.

The headquarters of the Council are now in Washington. At various times representatives were located in New York, Chicago and Hong Kong. In November 1979 an office was opened in Beijing. Since the fall of 1973, the Council has staffed an office at the Chinese Export Commodities Fair, and has also had representation at various mini-fairs held in cities throughout China.

NCUSCT Relations with U.S. and Chinese Governments

A good working relationship was maintained with the U.S. Government. The Council briefed senior Government officials going to China and before meetings with the Chinese in this country. The Council was able to present the concerns of member firms to Government agencies, and when problems did arise, refer members to the appropriate person or office. Legislation affecting trade was monitored, and Council staff provided expert testimony before congressional committees on such matters as Most Favored Nation tariff status, export controls, and legislative impediments to trade.

The Council was the U.S. counterpart to the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, and maintained a working relationship with it and Chinese government agencies involved in foreign trade. Through this cooperative association the Council provided its members with representation and referral to the Chinese.

Series Descriptions

National Council Administrative Files

The administrative files are most directly related to the activities of the Council's president and vice president and their support staff. They relate to administrative matters such as organizing the office; setting policy, goals, and objectives for the Council; making arrangements and compiling materials for the board and general membership meetings; and communicating with member companies. The formation and history of the Council; its role in developing trade relations with China, and its relationship with other organizations involved in trade, scholarly, or cultural exchanges with China, and with U.S. Government agencies are

documented. Also documented is the establishment of liaison with the People's Republic of China Liaison Office and the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade.

In addition to General Correspondence, three other series – Associations, Councils, Societies, Committees; Government Agencies; and States – are largely correspondence files. It is not always clear why a particular item is filed where it is; the researcher should consult all of the files, using several access points. These files contain correspondence to and from the entire staff.

Sub-Series Descriptions

Board of Directors Meetings, 1973-78

Correspondence, memoranda, agenda, minutes, and reports relating to arrangements for and the business conducted at the semiannual meetings of the Board. Included at the end of the series are files for Board committees.

Annual Meetings, 1973-77

Correspondence, memoranda, agenda, minutes, reports, and texts of speeches relating to arrangements for and the proceedings of the Council's annual membership meetings.

General Correspondence, 1973-78

Incoming and outgoing correspondence with individuals, businesses, and associations, and printed materials such as annual reports, brochures, and catalogs. Includes inquiries about Council membership and services, invitations to trade fairs, trade with China, and employment opportunities. Early 1973 correspondence, prior to formal organization and staffing of the Council, is with officials from the Department of Commerce.

Associations, Councils, Societies, Committees, 1973-76

Incoming and outgoing correspondence with other groups associated with China, printed materials issued by them, and staff memoranda of meetings and conversations with representatives of the groups. A portion of the material was received in response to a mass mailing sent out by the Council. Files reflect cooperative efforts between the Council and other organizations in promoting common goals and sharing information.

Government Agencies, 1973-77

Incoming and outgoing correspondence and printed materials. The close working relationship between the Council and various agencies is shown in the courtesy and transmittal letters. Topics touched on include arrangements for conferences and delegations, tariff status, and trade regulations. Arranged alphabetically by agency.

State Files, 1973-77

Incoming and outgoing correspondence with officials from universities, banks, port authorities, state governments, trade and economic development councils, and chambers of commerce; and printed materials such as newsletters, annual reports, and brochures.

Earliest correspondence is with the Department of Commerce. Correspondence relates to Council membership and services, and developing commercial relations and exchanges with the PRC.

Cables, 1974-78

Cables to and from the Council's Washington office and the Hong Kong representative, staff traveling in Asia, the USLO, and Chinese officials with the CCPIT and foreign trade corporations. The cables relate to arrangements for delegations; Council activities in China, Hong Kong, and at the Canton Fair; current reports on delegations and activities at the CECF; and press releases to be issued when delegations left China. Includes an account of the aftermath of the 1976 earthquake and the death of Chairman Mao.

Subject File, 1973-83

Correspondence, memoranda, reports, and clippings relating to the origin and purposes of the Council and its relationship with member companies, the CCPIT, and the PRCLC. Included are files of inter-office memoranda and communications with members, as well as material relating to conferences, delegations exchanged between the CCPIT and Council board, trips arranged for PRCLC officials, and US-China relations.

Office Reading File, 1973-77

Copies of outgoing correspondence and staff memoranda. Also includes occasional trip reports and minutes of meetings with committees and Chinese representatives from the CCPIT, PRCLC, and foreign trade corporations.

Staff Files, 1973-74

Correspondence, memoranda, and biographical sketch of Eugene A. Theroux, the Council's first vice president. The file predates formal organization of the Council and includes a memo outlining suggested activities for it.

Business Advisory Services Department

This department was directly involved in providing advice and consultations to member firms, organizing and working with member committees, and making arrangements for receiving and sending delegations. The Importers Steering Committee was formed in 1974, followed by the formation of importer committees based on product areas to parallel the Chinese foreign trade corporations. Special services for importers included assistance in the process of obtaining an invitation to the Chinese Export Commodities Fair, sponsoring pre-fair briefings, and providing staff assistance and office facilities at the fair; and publication of a newsletter. The exporter committees, based on industrial sectors, were formed in 1976. These committees were involved in market research, technical exchanges, and promotion of trade in their sectors.

The records are arranged into importer and exporter services files. The bulk of the files are from importer services, with only committee files from exporter services.

Importer Committees, 1973-80

Correspondence, memoranda, membership lists, minutes, presentations, reports, and a questionnaire and the returned responses. They reflect the work of the committees in facilitating the import and marketing of Chinese products in the US. Committee-based delegation materials are found here as well as in the Delegations series.

Delegations, 1973-81

Cables, correspondence, memoranda, itineraries, minutes, and reports relating to the exchange of delegations. The files include working papers on arrangements, background material compiled for both Chinese and American participants, minutes of meetings, and trip reports written by the escort officer.

Trade Fairs, 1973-81

The Council sponsored a briefing prior to each semiannual Chinese Export Commodities Fair, handled requests for invitations from American companies, and staffed an office in Canton during the Fair. Briefing materials, correspondence, memoranda, cables, reports, lists of Americans attending, and minutes of meetings with Chinese officials document all of these activities. In addition to the major fair held in Canton, mini-fairs were held in other cities throughout China.

Subject File, 1973-80

Largely printed materials relating to textiles and the textile industry, and FDA materials relating to regulations, registration, and detentions of low acid foodstuffs. Also includes papers on food and beverage containers presented at a packaging symposium and reports prepared for the Chinese. Most of the reports are market surveys for specific products and compilations of directory information.

Staff Chronological Files, 1978-80

Copies of outgoing correspondence and memoranda, with occasional incoming correspondence attached. See also the Reynolds/Fox/Shapiro chronological file in Publications and Research Department files.

Exporter Committees, 1975-81

Correspondence, memoranda, minutes, membership lists, financial records, and delegation records. Committee names and structure were continually changing, and not all of the industrial sectors are represented in the files. Committees represented are from the agriculture, petroleum, and telecommunications and electronics industries.

Publisher's Note: The National Council for United States-China Trade is still existence, but has changed its name to the U.S.-China Business Council.

The full finding aid from the Gerald R. Ford Library for this collection can be found at:
<http://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/guides/Finding%20Aids/United%20States-China%20Business%20Council%20-%20Records.htm>