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PEACE AND WELFARE IN THE HEMISPHERE

Speech by the Acting Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Paul Martin, at the Opening Session of the Eighth American Regional Conference of the International Labour Organization, Ottawa, September 12, 1966.

Mr. Chairman,

I am honoured and pleased, on behalf of the Government of Canada, to extend a welcome to you and to other representatives of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office and to representatives of North, Central and South America participating in the Eighth American Regional Conference. The Prime Minister regrets that the necessity of attending the conference of Commonwealth prime ministers in London has made it impossible for him to greet you this morning.

The presence of the Director-General of the ILO, the Director-General of the Organization of American States and of governmental, labour and employer representatives, eminent in their respective fields in their own countries, makes this a noteworthy occasion for Canadians.

The holding of a major ILO conference in Canada is an event which will lead many of us in this country to reflect on earlier episodes in the history of this great international organization. It is 20 years since an ILO conference has been held in our country. We recall the years during the Second World War when the International Labour Office was located in Montreal.

I have reported to Members of this House of Commons on the proceedings of the Philadelphia conference in 1944. It was my opinion then, and time has confirmed my opinion, that the declaration adopted in Philadelphia at a critical point in the life of the Organization was "one of the historic pronouncements of civilized men". In setting forth the right of all human beings to employment, economic security and equal opportunity, it helped to set new goals for humanity in the era following the Second World War.

It seemed to us then that the principles set forth in Philadelphia would have been labelled revolutionary earlier in the century. I recall reflecting then on the "immense influence of time and knowledge on our ideas"