

World Health Organization, the United Nations Committee on Disarmament and the Economic Commission for Latin America, to which Canada has belonged since 1961....

There is also an international institution to which the countries of Latin America and the United States belong. Canada, on the other hand, is not a member. I am speaking, of course, of the Organization of American States, the OAS, the leading organization of our Hemisphere. Its membership includes two independent countries of the Caribbean - Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago; Jamaica has also just applied for membership. Why, then has Canada never taken the necessary steps to take its place with most of the other countries of the Hemisphere within this Organization?

Generally speaking, it would seem that the imperatives which impelled Canada to join similar organizations - NATO, for example - have not yet made themselves felt in the case of the OAS. Also, most Canadians are not very well informed about the OAS and, among those who know it well, there are a few who are convinced that Canada ought to become a member while others are distrustful and hence, opposed to membership.

If one goes a little more deeply into the arguments involved, one would have to admit that Canada, by joining the OAS, would be taking an unequivocal stand at the side of the countries of the Hemisphere and would at one stroke gain a voice in Hemispheric deliberations on political, economic

and social affairs, and in questions of collective security. On the other hand, the history of the Organization, in particular its evolution during the past few years, and also the parallel evolution of co-operation among member countries of the OAS should be considered....

Canada, wishing to avoid a renewal of the two world wars into which it had been drawn, participated actively in the preparatory work leading to the creation of the United Nations and became a member of this body. However, preoccupied with its own interests, and particularly with its relations with those parts of the world to which it was linked by history, and preoccupied also by its new responsibilities within the United Nations, Canada did not find sufficient reason to join the OAS. I might point out in passing, however, that our country became a member of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America in 1966 and that we have since taken an active part in its work....

From several points of view, the OAS is an admirable Organization. Of course this Organization is not without its weaknesses. It seems to me that it has not always achieved its desired objectives nor always used the appropriate means according to the circumstances. It has done a great deal in the past to preserve the peace of the Hemisphere and to provide this region of the world with a stability and a cohesion which it would not have had otherwise. At the present time, the OAS is in a period of transition....