

Inter-American affairs

An important avenue for the developing of closer relations with Latin America has been Canada's increasing participation in the activities of inter-American organizations. The involvement of this country with hemispheric bodies in 1977 illustrated the extent of its growing role in multilateral regional affairs. Canada's participation in one key hemispheric organization, the Inter-American Development Bank, was reflected in the decision to hold the Bank's 1978 annual meeting in Vancouver. A Canadian permanent-observer delegation attended the annual assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS). In February, the Executive Director of the Latin American Economic System (SELA) came to Ottawa to discuss technical co-operation with that body. In August the general assembly of the Pan-American Institute of Geography and History unanimously reselected Canada as the site of its Geography Commission. In September Canada was elected to the executive committee of the Directing Council of the Pan-American Health Organization. The Secretary-General of the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) visited Ottawa during the same month.

Prime Minister Trudeau and Mr Jamieson accepted invitations from the President of the United States, the Head of Government of Panama and the Secretary-General of the OAS to witness the September signing of the Panama Canal Treaties in Washington, a gathering that brought together most leaders of hemispheric governments.

Venezuela

By virtue of its position as Canada's major supplier of foreign oil, Venezuela is our largest Latin American trading partner. Canada's total trade with Venezuela reached \$1.9 billion in 1977, an increase of approximately \$230 million over the figure for 1976. Because Venezuela is a country of commanding stature in Latin America and in Third World forums, Prime Minister Trudeau visited Caracas in January 1976 for the express purpose of developing closer ties and providing a broader base to Canada's relations with it. His visit resulted in a dramatic rise in the number of exchanges between the two nations, including, during 1977, a variety of high-level contacts.

In February a delegation from the Venezuelan Congress visited Ottawa to observe the operation of the Canadian Parliament. In March, Mr MacEachen went to Caracas in his capacity as co-chairman of the Conference on International Economic Co-operation to discuss outstanding issues with the Venezuelan co-chairman Sr Perez Guerrero. The first Canada-Venezuela symposium on petroleum was held in February in Venezuela, with officials of government and private industry in attendance from both countries. A second symposium was held in Edmonton in June, and the delegation from the Venezuelan Ministry of Energy and Mines afterwards came to Ottawa to seek other possible areas for co-operation. The then Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, Jean Chrétien, visited Caracas in June to support Canadian participation in the building of a 700-km railroad in Venezuela. Premier Hatfield of New Brunswick was also in Venezuela in June to seek opportunities for trade and investment. Judd Buchanan, Minister of Public Works, travelled to Venezuela in June to study its public-works program.

During 1977, there were some 450 Venezuelan students in Canadian universities under the auspices of the Gran Mariscal de Ayacucho Scholarship Program, which is financed by the Venezuelan Government.

Brazil

The direction of Canada's relations with Brazil provides an excellent illustration of the part trade and investment play in its relations with Latin America as a whole. Canadian investment in Brazil has been estimated at a figure as high as \$2 billion; trade between the two countries reached almost \$490 million during 1977, making Brazil the second-largest of Canada's Latin American trading partners (the largest being Venezuela). A Joint Committee on Trade and Economic Relations, established in 1976 to provide an official forum for the discussion of economic questions and the proposing of new initiatives, meets twice a year, in Canada and in Brazil. Its first session was held in Ottawa in the autumn of 1976.