

our hemispheric partners, the USA, Mexico, Venezuela (and laterally) Colombia in the Caribbean Basin Initiative. This initiative is a common expression of political will to exert our best efforts to stimulate economic and social development in the area through programs of cooperation, and without military or political preconditions.

Canada's conviction is that current instability in the area is deeply rooted in the socio-economic conditions of the region - the poverty, the unfair distribution of wealth, and the social injustice. We may find little comfort in the records of some of these governments, particularly as regards human rights; but the question must be posed. Do we back away and point our fingers in an accusing fashion, or do we try, through political, economic and institutional channels to encourage them in their frail beginnings? (I am heartened indeed to know that this liberal group saw fit to sponsor a meeting held, I believe, this past weekend, in Nicaragua. It is through such meetings that the theory of the North South Dialogue is put into practice).

Central America is by no means the only area of the developing world which is undergoing extremes on the economic and political scale, and this leads me to reiterate the absolute necessity of the western world's commitment on the North-South question. We in the North are, without any doubt the wealthiest and freest peoples in the history of the earth. Under no other system have people been able to sustain the growth rates, the political sophistication, nor the economic betterment that we have given to our peoples since the Second World War. Yet, at the same time, almost a billion human beings in this world live on the borderline of existence. We must ensure that they at least have access to the most fundamental of human requirements - food, shelter, health care, clear water, and education. In a shrinking world we have to broaden the definition of who is our neighbour. The plight of our fellow human beings demands our attention, regardless of the national boundaries or ideologies that may divide us.

Where, then, can we find our starting point in defining a liberal agenda for North-South affairs in the 1980s? As liberals, I think we should start with reality. with the facts - and one of the most appalling facts I know is that of the estimated 125 million children born this year in the

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