

THE OAS

The issue that dominated Canadian opinion on Latin America was the question of membership in the OAS. In fact, Canadian concern over this issue so clouded expressions of interest in Latin America that it became apparent that Canadians regarded the OAS and Latin America as one and the same thing. To add to the confusion is the fact that there appears little awareness of what Latin America really is, a collection of independent states, and a few colonial possessions, with personalities all their own. This confusion in the Canadian mind has not permitted the public to have a clear understanding of what the OAS or Latin America or an individual country (e.g. Mexico) is all about.

Prior to 1957 there had been several scholarly publications dealing with Canada and the Inter-American system (whether the old Pan American Union or the OAS).<sup>1</sup> Canada had been prepared to join the system in 1940, but as Douglas Anglin has pointed out, the United States, the dominant partner in the system, had been reluctant to have her. In the post-war period there was considerable Canadian reluctance to try again. Yet, after 1957, the issue came to the fore as the new Diefenbaker administration searched for new and different policies, and membership in the OAS as a "prospect of a major departure in Canadian policy toward Latin America" offered "an immediate appeal."<sup>2</sup>

This awakened interest in Latin America has provided a decade of debate. From the Hon. Sidney Smith's statement in December, 1957, until this year there have been appeals to the Canadian public to join or not to