

A more important factor, I believe, was represented by the collective-security provisions of the OAS charter and the closely related articles of the Rio Treaty. In particular, it might have been difficult to muster public support in Canada for an arrangement under which constraints could be placed on Canada's freedom to conduct its foreign policy in accordance with what Canadians see as their national interest. We are, of course, members of a number of organizations in which we have agreed to consult on matters of foreign policy. But in none of these, with the sole exception of the Security Council of the United Nations, is there provision for taking decisions by majority vote -- decisions which become binding on member states whether or not they have explicitly subscribed to them. At a time when Canadians look to the Government to pursue a foreign policy that will be seen to reflect Canadian perceptions and Canadian aims, it would have been difficult for the Canadian Government to accept commitments in the OAS that would be seen by many Canadians to run counter to this trend.

Canadian membership in the OAS is not, however, foreclosed. We hope, from the vantage-point of permanent observership, to gain a better view of the workings of the OAS. We are also following closely the shift in the direction of OAS activities that commenced with the Act of Bogota in 1960 and that culminated in the adoption of the Protocol of Buenos Aires in 1967. The new emphasis the OAS is placing on raising living standards, on ensuring social justice, on achieving economic development and on promoting educational, scientific and cultural advancement is in line with Canadian priorities and represents a promising focus for fuller Canadian participation in the affairs of the hemisphere.

It is this same line of reasoning that prompted Canada, in May of this year, to become a member of the Inter-American Development Bank. This was not, of course, the beginning of our association with the Bank. Since 1964 we had, in fact, found it convenient to use the Bank as a channel for Canadian development assistance to Latin America. At the time of the foreign policy review no substantial modification of this arrangement was contemplated. A decision on full membership was explicitly set aside because of the relatively high proportion of Canada's total development-assistance budget that membership was expected to absorb.

In the event, we decided to move beyond the policy foreshadowed in the foreign policy review. We did so because it seemed to us that it would not be compatible with Canada's reshaped policy towards Latin America to remain detached from the institution that, perhaps more than any other, is identified by Latin Americans with their hopes for a brighter economic future. I am glad to say that our Latin American friends understood Canada's accession to membership in the Bank in precisely that spirit. They welcomed the increased funds Canadian membership will mobilize for Latin American development. They also welcomed the fact that the addition of another donor member will help to give the Bank a more distinctively multilateral character. But, above all, they welcomed our accession to the Bank as a real and convincing expression of Canada's commitment to the hemisphere.