

The new importance of Latin America is also a result of major political developments. With global decolonization through the last two decades and the appearance of oil power in the 1970s, the structure and distribution of international power has shifted and the agenda of international politics has changed. The Third World countries now form a solid majority at the United Nations. Of course, the Latin American countries are quite different in their history and level of development from most of the Third World. But the Latin Americans had done a good deal of thinking on reforms in the international economic order as early as the 1950s so that particularly outstanding individuals such as Raul Prebisch of Argentina, the founder of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America, were able to act as intellectual leaders in the North-South dialogue. This started at the first UNCTAD meeting in 1964, continued through the mid-1970s at the Conference on International Economic Co-operation which was co-chaired by Venezuela and Canada, and it is evident now in preparations for the forthcoming global negotiations at the UN where ideas such as President López Portillo's proposal for a World Energy Development Plan will be prominent.

Latin America has also shown its new weight in relation to other issues, such as the general agreement on tariffs and trade, the Law of the Sea, and the control of nuclear proliferation, all of which are of major interest to Canada. To take only the matter of non-proliferation, which has become a central issue in Canadian Foreign Policy, we welcomed the initiative and the imagination shown by the Latin American countries, led by Mexico, when in 1967, three years before the non-proliferation treaty, they designed a treaty of their own, the treaty of Tlatelolco, which declared Latin America a nuclear weapons free zone. We believe that, in doing so, the countries of Latin America set a precedent and an example which has application in other regions of the world and which makes a major contribution to international confidence and stability. We hope that the Tlatelolco Treaty will soon be in effect for all the countries of the region and, in particular, for Brazil and Argentina, which are the countries with the most advanced nuclear programs but which have not yet felt able, for reasons of their own, to accept the restraints of the non-proliferation treaty.

The new global prominence of Latin America is of direct interest to Canada in the conduct of its foreign policy. Canada is a major aid donor and it has taken a very active role on North-South issues. We are at present concerned by such questions as petro-dollar recycling and the management of LDC debt, the creation of energy plans in oil-poor developing countries, and the limitation of the demographic explosion which threatens to undermine so much progress in the Third World. These are all questions which interest Latin American countries and on which we should be able to co-operate in seeking solutions. Canada also has special interests in the Caribbean, where certain Latin American countries, such as Venezuela, Mexico and Cuba, have been active and influential. Both Canada and several Latin American countries have played leading roles at the Law of the Sea conference, and we have been able to co-operate very fruitfully. Thus there is, I believe, a basis for much closer contacts between Canada and Latin American governments on many global political questions.