

TOWARD CLOSER RELATIONS WITH LATIN AMERICA

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State for External Affairs recently tabled in the House of Commons the preliminary report of the Canadian Government's ministerial mission to Latin America.

The report analyses the work of the mission's 30-day visit to nine Latin American countries toward the end of last year and provides both factual information and preliminary assessments on which the current review of Canadian policy toward Latin America will be based.

The report makes clear that there is scope for more frequent and more intensive consultation on international and hemispheric political questions between Canada and the Latin American countries. It indicates that this could come about either through Canadian membership in the Organization of American States or through closer bilateral relations with the Latin American countries. The report also shows that there is scope for closer Canadian relations with regional organizations in Latin America and with certain organizations of the inter-American system. An important step toward closer bilateral relations has already been taken in the founding of the Joint Mexico-Canada Committee, in which the mission took part.

AID

As a result of discussions on aid, the report indicates, two main points emerged: the definition of additional scope for Canadian development assistance; and the discovery of real possibilities for co-operation with volunteer agencies already working in Latin America.

To realize the full potential which these opportunities present to enhance Canadian relations with Latin America, studies are under way to determine the future level of Canadian aid to the area. Questions involved include: Canada's future relations with the Inter-American Development Bank; the possibility of setting up a bilateral aid programme and the balance between any bilateral aid and any multi-lateral aid; the possibility of setting up directly administered programmes; the degree of co-operation with regional groupings; and the possibility of expanding the programme of aid to private institutions.

TRADE AND ECONOMY

The report outlines the unique and distinctive opportunities Latin America offers Canadian industry to participate in major projects and industrial development, on a commercial basis and on terms of equality with suppliers round the world.

This is the consensus, the report states, of many intensive discussions at ministerial and official levels in each of the nine countries visited. Meetings covered a wide range of subjects: world trade; world wheat pricing and marketing; international trade within the area through LAFTA, the proposed Andean Pact, and the Central American Common Market; bilateral trade with emphasis on the necessity

for two-way characteristics; tourism; and standardising accounting of import-export figures.

The report reveals the tremendous importance the Latin American countries attach to their economic development and industrialization, placing great emphasis on: improved infrastructure; development of vast untapped natural and agricultural resources; and industrial development.

The following broad avenues of economic activity are listed by the report as areas mutually beneficial to Latin America and Canada, and in which Canadian industry can make major contributions: telecommunications; consulting engineering services; mining, forestry and fishery equipment; hydroelectric equipment; grain storage facilities; forest-fire fighting equipment; pulp and paper machinery; aerial surveys; specialized aircraft; nuclear reactors; subway equipment; road and railway equipment; and educational equipment.

The report suggests a number of ways of bringing Canada and Latin America closer together in the economic sphere; these include: the Canadian business community being made more fully aware of Latin America opportunities; Canadian consortiums being organized to bid on large projects; Latin American countries being encouraged to make more efforts to take advantage of Canada's relatively "open door" import policy; greater emphasis being placed on tourist promotion in Canada by Latin American countries; review the credit policy for wheat; government-financing facilities and techniques being re-examined to assure that Canadian suppliers and exporters remain competitive with other world suppliers.

By these and other means, it is hoped that a new and vigorous drive to strengthen and enlarge Canadian trade and economic relations with the large Latin American market may get under way to the mutual benefit of Canada and the Latin American countries.

CULTURE AND SCIENCE

The report states that opportunities for increased cultural exchange between Latin America and Canada are numerous and include exchanges of professors and students in the realms of pure, applied and social sciences, as well as in the fields of the performing and plastic arts. The report recognizes that the electronic media will have an important role to play in these developments.

The report states that the possibilities of future co-operation in science and, in particular in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, to which many Latin American countries give high priority, were also explored.

INFORMATION AND REPRESENTATION

The report discusses the desirability of further initiatives to increase the flow of reciprocal public information and to co-operate in the field of tourism.

In conclusion, the report considers the effectiveness of the present deployment of official Canadian representation in Latin America.