

In speaking of Latin America today I have concentrated, deliberately, on the positive aspects and possibilities in our relations. I considered that both desirable and appropriate for this occasion. But there must be no misunderstanding. Canada has a long, proud record of concern for human rights. We are no less troubled today than yesterday with human rights abuses in the world wherever they occur, including Latin America. Such abuses affect us profoundly; and they cannot fail to have an adverse impact on the tone and substance of our bilateral relations. This should not surprise anyone - it flows from the nature of Canadian society and the traditional Canadian respect for the rights of the individual person; and it has been reflected over the years in our efforts to help improve the human condition, through development assistance; the expansion of the rule of law and support for fundamental democratic principles.

As far as Latin America is concerned, I want our friends there to appreciate that respect on their part for human rights is bound to enhance the context within which our relations are conducted, whereas violations, and particularly flagrant violations, of individual rights cannot leave us indifferent. How far Canada can and should go in making its views known is a question to be considered in each case. Our aim in Latin America, and elsewhere, must be to contribute to a genuine improvement in human rights, by private or public means, or both. We should not, however, make public declarations for their own sake, or without regard for their effectiveness in achieving the results we desire. This is an important consideration I intend to keep very much in mind as I examine specific cases in the months ahead.