

Resuming the debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Bosa, calling the attention of the Senate to the Eighty-Sixth Inter-Parliamentary Conference, held in Santiago, Chile, from 7th to 12th October, 1991.—
(*Honourable Senator Nurgitz*).

Hon. Nathan Nurgitz: Honourable senators, first, I should like to thank Senator Bosa for raising this matter. Tomorrow, it will be my intention, during the course of Presentation of Reports from Inter-Parliamentary Delegations, to table a formal report. However, I have a few comments to make at this time.

This conference was held as a follow-up to a conference that was to have been held in 1973. But events in Chile during those years and the unfortunate military regime of General Pinochet prevented the holding of the conference at that time. Thus, this was a make-up conference.

In October of 1990, Chile, because of its new constitution, its new government and its return to democracy, was welcomed back to the Inter-Parliamentary Union. It was a particularly touching and moving event for the Chilean parliamentarians to celebrate the return of democracy and what they considered to be the return of membership in the world community.

One of the prime objectives of the current government of President Aylwin has been to reintegrate Chile into the family of nations after being virtually ostracized for 17 years. The first step was to renew diplomatic relations, with the exception of Cuba, with those countries represented at the IPU which had severed ties with Chile in 1973.

• (1610)

Chile is also attempting to play a high profile role in international organizations. For example, the Chilean armed forces, for the first time in many years, are now participating in U.N. peacekeeping.

Hosting this IPU conference was part of that process of reintegration. At the inaugural conference the president of the Chilean IPU group expressed deep gratitude to the union for its defence of the human rights of Chilean parliamentarians and the Chilean people during the Pinochet years saying:

We welcome you with open hearts and joyful spirits because Chile and its institutions have rejoined the world Parliament with your support and that of the popular forces of the country.

The new government has also embarked on a program of trade liberalization, seeking free trade arrangements with countries of the hemisphere, while at the same time diversifying trade toward the Pacific Rim.

I was interested to learn about Canada's economic relationship with Chile. In 1990 Canada was the largest foreign investor, contributing almost \$500 million U.S. to the Chilean economy, and last June a memorandum of understanding promoting economic cooperation was signed. It is designed as a blueprint for developing a commercial relationship and is expected to create a heightened awareness of both Chilean and

[Senator Molgat.]

Canadian private sectors of opportunities for participation in our respective economies.

During our time in Santiago we had an opportunity to meet representatives of Canadian companies currently working in Chile to discuss the nature and extent of Canadian investment there. On another occasion, I met with the Chilean equivalent of the Santiago board of trade to discuss economic matters. These meetings were extremely useful in learning more about Canadian investments and in promoting Canadian interests abroad.

These meetings were arranged by the Canadian embassy and I want to endorse what Senator Bosa has said about the Canadian ambassador to Chile, Mr. Michael Mace, and his staff. Michael Mace knows and understands the work of the IPU and the opportunities that can be provided through parliamentary delegations to further Canadian interests. We appreciated not only the excellent support and assistance for our visit to Santiago, but especially the way in which he took the initiative to forge new links with Chilean authorities and private sector officials. He is a credit to the Canadian foreign service and worthy of very high praise and commendation.

As well, I want to mention the typically unpaid Canadian diplomats, sort of unsung heroes, that is, the wives of diplomats who are ever present and ever helpful. Jane Mace, the wife of the ambassador, and Madeline Bickford and Vicky Turner were always available to assist the delegation and were wonderful people to have around us in Chile.

With respect to the conference itself, there were approximately 500 parliamentarians from 95 countries. A very memorable event was the readmission of the three Baltic countries: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Representatives from those countries gave heartfelt speeches about their joy in rejoining the union and describing the challenges which lie ahead.

Reverend Alfonsas Svarinskas, the representative from Lithuania, who had spent 25 years in a concentration camp, gave a particularly poignant defence of democratic ideals. For those of us in this country who sometimes take the principles of democracy for granted, it was a moving experience to hear someone speak so passionately about free a speech, a multi-party system, a free and independent press and an independent judiciary.

Our Canadian delegation met with the Baltic legislators to learn more about the current situation and about the type of support which their countries require in order to establish firmly democratic institutions. The needs of the Baltic parliaments are great. They need technical support in almost all areas of parliamentary activity. This is an area where Canada might be able to offer concrete assistance and support.

The IPU groups in the three Baltic parliaments have just been formed and have no financial resources. In fact, the travel and living expenses of those three legislators were paid by five members countries of the Nordic group: Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark.

Honourable colleagues, I would like to make a strong plea for some type of assistance to those fledgling organizations. If