

I should like to thank Your Excellency for your warm words of welcome, your very gracious remarks about my country and your flattering references to me. Your remarks about me were especially kind, coming as they do from a man who is not only one of Colombia's major political leaders, but also a skilled diplomat and a leading intellectual. Indeed, your interests, your knowledge and your activities are so all encompassing that you are more a man of the Renaissance than of our own time, with its narrow specializations and limited interests. You are a doctor of law and economic sciences; you have served abroad in your country's foreign service; you have been a journalist; you have been elected to both Houses of Congress and in the midst of all these other activities, you have found the time to establish an international reputation as a historian. Your biography of President Rafael Nunez is a book that professional historians of Latin America in Canada consider essential reading.

I also appreciated Your Excellency's references to the good relations that exist between Canada and Colombia. I might add that the warm hospitality that we have received since we first arrived on Colombian soil has been for us a concrete indication of the significance that you attach to these relations. In a sense, however, I consider that our relations are more than good, they are relations of empathy for we both are democracies concerned with the essential values of political liberty and personal freedom; we have similar social values and we both have played a moderate and constructive role in international affairs. It is because of these bonds of friendship, respect and understanding that I have come here today, for we wish to establish closer relations with you in all areas to the fullest extent possible.

As an indication of our intentions to do so, I have brought with me an extensive delegation representing the Canadian Parliament, the Canadian business community and several government departments. In addition several journalists have accompanied us. I have with me Mr. Marcel Prud'homme, Chairman of the Committee on External Affairs and National Defence of the House of Commons; Mr. Gary German, Chairman of the Executive Council of the Canadian Association for Latin America and Special Assistant to the Executive Vice-President of Noranda Mines Limited; Mr. Frank Clark, Executive Director of the Canadian Association for Latin America; as well as senior representatives of my own Department, the Department of External Affairs, the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce, the Canadian International Development Agency, the Department of Agriculture and the Export Development Corporation of Canada.