

reputation for balanced and impartial analysis and on our ability to acknowledge, comprehend, and take into consideration the other party's point of view. Our long standing commitment to creative diplomacy and meaningful international communication is badly needed in the OAS today. Canada has matured and developed considerably over the past fifteen years in the formulation of enlightened policy options for Latin America and the Caribbean, as is evidenced by the findings and recommendations of the Parliamentary Sub-committee looking into Canada's relations with its hemispheric neighbors in 1981 and 1982. It certainly cannot be argued, as it has been in the past, that Canada has nothing to offer the OAS, or that little will be gained by joining the organization.

Chance to help human rights

One simple technical advantage of full Canadian membership of the OAS is that by becoming a Member State Canada could take part in the important work of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), something that its current status of Permanent Observer does not permit. Canada is already internationally respected for its endeavors in the area of human rights. Leading activists for human rights in Latin America, among them Adolfo Pérez Esquivel and Jacobo Timerman, have already praised Canada's firm and encouraging stand on the matter. Canadian involvement in the activities of the IACHR would give the Commission added vitality, would increase its visibility, and would improve its overall effectiveness.

By taking on full member status in the OAS, all Canada risks is becoming more involved in issues that should (and do) already concern us as privileged citizens of a free and democratic society. Full Canadian membership would almost certainly mean participating in a much-needed process of OAS reform, possibly along the lines suggested by the recently convened Inter-American Dialogue, and fostering reconciliation between, in some cases, bitterly divided ranks. Such a decision would serve to demonstrate to the world community, as did our chairmanship of the Cancun Conference, the sincerity of Canadian commitment to North-South dialogue. The OAS is an important international forum which could operate considerably more efficiently than it does at present if Canada's moderating influence were brought to bear on the issues which concern, equally, all nations of the hemisphere.

Canada has before it both an easy option (maintaining its status as Permanent Observer in the OAS) and a difficult challenge (seeking full membership in the organization). Our sense of integrity surely dictates that making do with an easy option is no longer good enough. It is our responsibility to rise to the challenge and promote the cause of peace, stability and mutual respect throughout the hemisphere by participating in the OAS as a full-fledged Member State. □

independent stands been taken on highly contentious issues. The matter of relations with Cuba is one such example.

Like Mexico, Canada has insisted on taking an autonomous stand and has flatly refused to have its dealings with Havana made accountable to Washington. The benefits for Canada of maintaining relations with Cuba has been significant; as well as granting Canadians enormous good will south of the Rio Grande, Cuba is now Canada's fourth largest Latin American trading partner, after Brazil, Mexico and Venezuela. If the open and cordial relationship Canada enjoys with the United States has been able to withstand such a profound irritant as trade and diplomacy with Cuba, then relations between Ottawa and Washington are unlikely to be seriously affected as a result of differing points of view over issues raised within the context of the OAS.

Canada's support not automatic

By the same token, it would be somewhat naive of Latin and Caribbean Member States to expect that if Canada assumed full OAS membership they then could count upon unwavering Canadian support for their positions in the organization. Canada is a moderate, middle power, and is seen as such (and not as an all-purpose problem solver) by Latin and Caribbean nations. In an age of political extremism, Canada is still held in high regard for its fairness, objectivity and even-handedness. Today, the capacity to sustain the centre of the political spectrum is one which often provokes the cynical ire of the demagogue, whether from the right or the left. But the politics of moderation, entailing a commitment to compromise, flexibility and resourcefulness, are precisely what the OAS could stand to benefit from, especially after the rift within the organization which occurred during the South Atlantic crisis. Bridging that rift will almost certainly necessitate a sweeping reform of the OAS, a reform in which an advocate of the politics of moderation can play a crucial part. Canada may never again be presented with such a unique opportunity to assume a vital role in the reshaping of the way in which hemispheric affairs are discussed and organized.

However imperfect the operation of the OAS has been in the past — and one does well to remember that global or regional institutions like the United Nations, NATO, the Warsaw Pact, the European Economic Community or the Organization of African Unity seldom conduct their group affairs without internal divisions or dissent — the point is that there are urgent hemispheric issues that currently demand the organization's attention, issues on which Canada could, and should, voice its opinion. The resolution of such complex and sensitive matters as conflict in Central America, sovereignty over the South Atlantic islands, renewed relations between Cuba and other nations in the Americas are ones on which Canada can have a substantial impact. Full membership of the OAS would provide ample scope for a determined Canadian initiative founded on our