

Canada and the Hemisphere

A n e v e r - c l o s e r r e l a t i o n s h i p

In the last two decades the southern part of the Hemisphere has changed beyond recognition, and so has Canada's relationship with it. Twenty years ago democracy was a scarce item in Latin American countries; today it is the rule.

The era when Canada steered clear of hemispheric ties is a fading memory. Since 1990 it has been a member of the Organization of American States, and it is a free-trade partner of Mexico and the United States (through the North American Free Trade Agreement) and of Chile (through a bilateral accord). Last year, the OAS General Assembly met in Windsor, Ontario. This year, Québec City hosts the Summit of the Americas.

Canada and its hemispheric neighbours together fight illicit drugs, money laundering, illegal trafficking in firearms and threats to human rights. They also run joint demining programs. Countries of the region were among the first and most resolute supporters of the Ottawa Convention banning anti-personnel mines.

Meanwhile, economic ties have been expanding rapidly. Merchandise trade rose by nearly 200 percent in the last decade alone. Canadian investments in Latin America and the Caribbean now total \$32 billion. And Canada is playing an important part in the negotiations to form a Free Trade Area of the Americas. This would be the largest free trade area in the world, uniting 800 million people in one market.

