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*Note du sous-secrétaire adjoint aux Affaires extérieures**Memorandum by Assistant Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs*

SECRET

Ottawa, March 12, 1953

(For Mr. Léger)

THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES

I do not altogether agree with the arguments in your undated memorandum on this subject. It is certainly true that the trade side of our relations with Latin American countries is the most important aspect of our policy. I think, however, that one can only speculate in very general terms about whether membership in the OAS would do anything to increase the trade figures. There is certainly something to be said for the point of view that in hard-headed business transactions the Latin Americans are not likely to place undue importance on membership.

2. One of the things that has always troubled me about Canadian membership in the OAS is that we might find ourselves in the uncomfortable position of having to take sides with either the United States or the Latin bloc. I suspect that the line between the United States and the rest is more sharply drawn in the OAS than in any other organization to which we belong. In the United Nations and in NATO there is a shifting and regrouping of interests, so that sometimes we are with the United States and sometimes in opposition. It would be a very heavy responsibility to assume the role of "mediator" or "interpreter" between the United States and the Latins. It should not be overlooked that one reason which has impelled Latin American countries to think seriously about our membership in the OAS is the desire to have a counter-weight to the United States.

3. In addition to the absence of much enthusiasm in Canada for this move, there does not seem to be a great deal of enthusiasm in Latin America either. It seems to me that a prerequisite for our joining should be a pretty definite demand by opinion in both areas. As far as Canada is concerned I think there has been more interest shown in the House of Commons in recent years in our joining a Pacific pact than in our joining the OAS. Mere token membership in anything is pretty unsatisfactory. If there is not much interest in Canada and if membership serves no real needs the danger is that we sit at the table, go through a few vague motions and look rather ridiculous.

4. I do agree that we should not be as coy about the subject as we have been in the past and that there is no reason why the topic should be avoided in discussions with Latin Americans. In fact, it would be interesting to have an assortment of their views as to why they would or would not like to have us in the Organization. I think it would be well worth while to seek the Minister's approval for a rather more open-minded attitude and communicate this to our Missions as well as using it in our discussions here with Latin American Missions.

R.M. M[ACDONNELL]