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Excerpts from an Address by the Honorable Mitchell Sharp, Secretary of States for External Affairs, at the Inauguration Ceremony, Fourteenth Congress of the International Institute of Latin American Literature, Toronto, August 24, 1969.

For many reasons, it gave me great pleasure to accept your invitation to open this Fourteenth Congress on Latin American Literature. Diplomacy and literature may not always be closely associated in the public mind; yet their practice has been united with distinction by many diplomats, and not least by those of Latin America. I am happy to say that we have several notable instances in Canada as well. I should like to think of my presence here tonight as due, at least in part, to this happy and mutually fruitful relationship....

This is, of course, the first time your Institute has held its Congress in Canada. It is highly appropriate that it should do so at the present point in history. Canada and Latin America share a hemisphere, but until a very recent period they went their separate ways in almost total mutual indifference. A Canadian business community has been active in many countries of Latin America, and Canadian missionaries, both Protestant and Roman Catholic, have made a substantial contribution to the religious life of Latin America. Latin America was known in Canada as a source of tropical products and dance music. These contacts, though not to be despised, led, it is hardly necessary to say, to each side's having a limited, one-dimensional, picture of the character and capabilities of the other.

In recent years, however, this situation has begun to change. Modern communications and transport have brought Canada and the Latin American countries much closer to each other in time and space. Trade between the two has increased and continues to increase substantially, and has diversified into almost every major field. Canadians have begun to visit Latin America in significant numbers, and more and more Latin Americans, travelling for business and pleasure, have come to know Canada directly. Most striking of all, the study of Latin America as an area and of Spanish and Portuguese language and literature, for long almost entirely ignored by Canadian universities, is now under way on a major scale. Several Canadian universities now offer well-rounded programs of Latin American studies, and many more offer courses in the Ibero-American languages and literatures. Canadians have gone in small but increasing numbers to Latin America to study in Latin American universities, and I am glad to say that the University of Toronto, our host, has pioneered in bringing Latin American students