

In Maracaibo the Shell Caribbean Company conducted us on a tour of part of the oil fields which have played such an important part in making Venezuela's currency one of the hardest in the world.

There is no doubt in my mind that Venezuela will continue to be one of our most important trading partners. We shall continue to need crude oil imports in large volume for our East coast and Maritime markets for many years to come and we will thus be contributing substantially to Venezuela's strength and prosperity.

Colombia

From Venezuela the Mission proceeded to Colombia, where we spent 4 days in Bogota, the capital, and also visited Barranquilla, the main Atlantic coast port.

The Mission were received by the Acting President of the Republic, Dr. Urdaneta Arbelaez, and also had interviews with several cabinet ministers. We had very interesting meetings with the directors of the Banco de la Republica, with the president and officials of the Flota Grancolombiana, with the Colombian Coffee-Producers Federation, and with other business organizations.

Among the numerous matters discussed with government officials was that of Colombia's wheat import policy. In the past, this has made it difficult for Canada to supply as much of the wheat as we would have wished. Under the new arrangement being introduced, Colombian importers will have a greater opportunity to plan ahead, and will thus be in a position to buy more wheat from Canada in those periods when local production is insufficient. I was also informed by Dr. Cabal, Minister of Agriculture, that Colombia will be lifting its current embargo against Canadian meat and livestock when the United States does so.

We had an opportunity to visit the ancient salt mines of Zipaquira, near Bogota, and the new soda-ash plant nearby, which began operations last year. We also visited the modern pharmaceutical laboratories of Frosst and Co., of Montreal, a new Canadian enterprise in Colombia.

Colombia is a country with a highly diversified economy. It is in a strong financial position and offers an important dollar market for many Canadian goods.

Our exports in 1952 totalled nearly \$14 million, and our imports were about \$18 million. Machinery, newsprint, asbestos, wheat and flour, malt and aluminum, are among our main exports to that market. In return, we buy coffee - Colombia is our second largest supplier - and smaller quantities of bananas and other items. Our first purchase of rice from Colombia was announced recently, and I hope that a more diversified import trade with Colombia may be developed. We shall soon have a Canadian embassy established in Bogota, and can look forward to an era of even closer relations between Canada and Columbia.

Dominican Republic

We had a brief but busy stay in Ciudad Trujillo, Dominican Republic, during which we were received by President Hector Trujillo, and members of his cabinet, and numerous other government and business representatives.