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CANADA AND LATIN AMERICA -- THE PRESENT JUNCTURE

An Address by Mr. Jean-Pierre Goyer, Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, at the Inaugural Meeting of the Canadian Association for Latin American Studies, York University, Toronto, June 12, 1969.

In the context of the review of Canada's external policy now under way, especially that part of the review concerned with Canada's relations with Latin America, I find it wholly appropriate that an organization such as the Canadian Association for Latin American Studies should be created, since these special circumstances provide it with a natural objective: to increase mutual knowledge between Canada and Latin America and to establish machinery towards that end. Although your organization is but a few hours old, it represents both a remarkable pool of knowledge and a means whereby that knowledge can be put to use. For its part, the Government has pooled its experience with a view to drawing up its future Latin American policy. I am, therefore, very happy, this evening, to be able to establish a link between these two initiatives, by attempting to trace the broad outlines of our relations with Latin America since 1945 and to indicate some basic elements which will guide us in the formulation of our new policy....

In dealing with the topic of relations between Canada and Latin America as they exist at the moment, and their evolution since 1945, I must first recognize that, from an objective viewpoint, they have perhaps not been as much in the forefront of our international preoccupation as they should be. It is obvious, also, that our relations with the United States, our very powerful neighbour, inevitably concern us more than our relations with countries south of the Rio Grande. It is also clear that our ties with Europe and the countries of the Commonwealth have, in general, been closer or more closely developed than those with Latin America. More recently still, the ties created with French-speaking countries have assumed proportions which, in a few respects, go beyond the present development of our relations with Latin America. From a purely geographical point of view, it could even be said that sometimes events in Asia or Africa attract the attention of Canadians more than those in the southern half of our Hemisphere. Nevertheless, one must admit that Canada is now closer to Latin America than it was 25 years ago, and I believe that this evolution will be accelerated from now on. This, in summary, is the present state of our relations with Latin America, in comparison with our relations with other parts of the world.