

CANADA AND LATIN AMERICA:  
CHALLENGE AND RESPONSE  
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ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE

Last November, I announced that the expanded programme of Canadian economic assistance to under-developed countries would include additional lending resources, which, in the case of Latin America, would be provided in close co-operation with the Inter-American Development Bank. Discussions have been continuing with this institution on the provision of development loans to Latin America, and it is expected that some mutually satisfactory arrangement will be worked out.

This audience will appreciate, of course, that Canada contributes in a substantial way to the various programmes of technical assistance and economic aid of the United Nations. This international aid flows in part to Latin America as one of the major under-developed areas of the world. We have not, up to now, had a separate government-to-government assistance programme for the Latin American countries. The programme of so-called "soft" loans for development purposes that I have referred to will be the first step in this direction. Over a period of time - subject, of course, to our capacity on an overall basis to give assistance abroad - more Canadian aid in various forms can be expected to flow to Latin America. I would also hope that more could be done in the future in the field of cultural relations by promoting the exchange of visits and by providing scholarships.

UNITED NATIONS

It would be wrong if I did not draw special attention to the close co-operation which has existed between Canada and Latin American states at the United Nations and in other international bodies. Latin American statesmen have played outstanding roles in many of the United Nations organs. The names of Galo Plaza of Ecuador, Padilla Nervo of Mexico, Sosa Rodrigues of Venezuela (the Secretary-General of the UN Conference on Trade and Development) and many others are known throughout the diplomatic world for statesmanship and forthright idealism.

Brazil has made a very significant contribution to the work of the UN Force in Gaza, where General Chaves of Brazil, who has unfortunately just fallen ill, has been the Commander. Brazil has also taken part in the Congo Force. Argentina and Ecuador participated in the Congo and Argentina, Chile and Ecuador in the Lebanon operation. Colombia participated in the UN action in Korea.

On many other issues at the United Nations Canada and Latin American countries have worked closely together. It would not, I think, be wrong to say there have been times when Canada was regarded as an honorary member of the Latin American caucus. We share a history with these countries which links the Old and the New Worlds in a way which has often resulted in opportunity for useful initiatives....

ENTRY INTO THE OAS

On the fundamental question of the membership of Canada in the Organization of American States my own views are well known. There are, of course, many factors that have to be examined closely in reaching a decision on such an important matter.

Among these is the curious situation that the OAS does not at present have any established and agreed procedure for the admission of new members. This is of interest not only to Canada but also for the newly-independent Commonwealth countries in the Caribbean, Jamaica and Trinidad, as well as those quasi-independent territories which may be expected to emerge to independence in the future. This is one of the aspects to which we are giving special attention. We also have to weigh the responsibilities and obligations Canada would assume on joining the OAS in relation to other demands elsewhere in the world on our resources.

Meanwhile, we are exploring ways whereby a closer and more effective association might be developed with the OAS Secretariat and some of the other related agencies to which I have already referred. Merely joining the OAS will not in itself work wonders; what will matter most is the extent to which we show ourselves prepared to co-operate in practical ways with other countries in the hemisphere. We can do - and in fact are doing - a good deal even without being a member. We should not become so preoccupied with institutional questions that we overlook opportunities which may in the meantime present themselves for worthwhile co-operation, or that we forget how much we are already working with our friends in this hemisphere.

I have indicated the extent to which Canada is already taking an active interest in a variety of practical ways in inter-American affairs. Some of this activity is within the framework of the OAS and some of it outside the OAS. Membership in the OAS would present obligations as well as advantages for Canada. I do not wish to leave the impression that Canadian membership in the OAS would be without difficulties. Nevertheless, I consider this to be part of the ultimate destiny of Canada as a country of this hemisphere.

CONCLUSION

At the United Nations, at NATO, indeed at every international meeting in which Canada takes part, we are confronted with dramatic evidence of the growing inter-dependence of the individual members of the world community. Canada has consistently taken the position that we must recognize and accept this inter-dependence even when it means the maintenance of relations with states whose ideologies we oppose with every strength at our command. Canada has also recognized and, what is more, impressed on other governments as best we can, that a crisis in one area involved all areas. Recent events in the Far East, on Cyprus and, of course, with respect to Cuba have, I trust, brought home to every nation the need in a nuclear age to ensure that we assess the consequences of our actions with full awareness of their international implications.

I can assure you that events in Latin America are now being given due weight in the conduct of Canadian foreign affairs. We are considering here today the future of our relations with a great continent of nations. Changes in these relations must, of course, be made with care and deliberation. There is no doubt that many changes have already taken place but even greater changes than we have yet seen will and must occur. Canada's economic and political ties with Latin America are developing rapidly. Individual Canadians are coming more and more to appreciate the importance of this area for the future of our own country....