



Statements and Speeches

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THE CHARACTER OF CANADA'S INVOLVEMENT WITH LATIN AMERICA

Remarks by the Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, Caracas, January 30, 1976.

Mr. President, Distinguished Guests, I can think of no more sincere expression of thanks to you for your gracious remarks than to say how pleased I am to be here in Venezuela, and to be here with my wife and my Canadian associates. The warmth of your welcome, Mr. President, and the warmth of your pleasant climate have combined to give us all a delightful beginning to this official visit.

I hasten to add that none of us had to travel to Venezuela to benefit from Venezuelan warmth. At this moment, in the cold Canadian winter, millions of Canadians are keeping warm through the employment of Venezuelan petroleum products -- tangible evidence of the links between our two countries.

It is my hope that this visit, which is the first of a Canadian Prime Minister to Venezuela -- indeed, the first of a Canadian Prime Minister to any Spanish-speaking country on this continent --, will so emphasize the benefits to be gained by each country from closer association that the term "hemisphere" will gain an enhanced dimension in the eyes of Venezuelans and of Canadians. It is perhaps ironic that, at the very moment that the world is getting smaller, the western hemisphere, in an equally figurative sense, is becoming larger. And it is revealing of both changes that the most intimate relations between Venezuela and Canada are in evidence not here in Caracas, nor in Ottawa, but in Paris at the epoch-making Conference on International Economic Co-operation, where a Venezuelan Minister, Manuel Perez Guerrero, and a Canadian Minister, Allan MacEachen, occupy the distinguished and crucial positions of co-chairmen. That fact illustrates a good deal about our countries and about the world of 1976. Interested as we both are in strengthening our bilateral relations, and determined that that shall take place, we are both equally committed to a functioning international community based on principles of fairness, equity and reason. If the world is going to emerge from its present period of fluidity in a more viable form, as I believe will be the case, then a combination of bilateral and multilateral acts are required. My presence here, Mr. President, is designed to be a contribution in both facets.

It is not by accident that the first visit of a Canadian Prime Minister to a South American Republic should be to Venezuela, the

birthplace of Simon Bolivar. There are few men whose vision and whose achievements guarantee their name a place in history. There are fewer still whose ideals are so exalted that they remain as fresh and as contemporary today as they were a century and a half ago. In 1819, with Ayacucho still five years distant, Bolivar addressed the Angostura Congress. It was in that speech that he employed words that are still prophetic and inspirational. He said:

"...my imagination, taking flight to the ages to come, is captured by the vision of future centuries, and when, from that vantage-ground, I observe with admiration and amazement the prosperity, the splendours, the fullness of life that will then flourish in this vast region, I am overwhelmed."

Mr. President, a nation that can produce men of the stature of Simon Bolivar is a rich nation indeed. To you and to your countrymen and -women, I bring greetings from the Government and people of Canada.

Though Canadians speak different languages from you, though our history and geography are quite distinct, though our legal system was spawned from a different source, though our institutions of government are of a different model -- a parliamentary model --, we find it to our advantage to identify and pursue activities in co-operation with you that are mutually beneficial. And I hasten to add that there are a good number.

Canada is not a member of the Organization of American States. It is not a member even though the historic 1948 Bogota Charter was worded specifically to permit membership to accrue to "American States" as distinct from the previously-restrictive phrase "American Republics". But, though we are not a member of the OAS, we are very much a participant in the inter-American system. Since 1970, when my Government carried out a thorough foreign policy review as one of its initial major tasks, Canadian involvement in the inter-American system has accelerated considerably. In 1970, while a long-time member of the Postal Union of the Americas and Spain, we were a member of only one OAS specialized organization, the Pan-American Institute of Geography and History. We are now a member of two more: the Pan-American Health Organization and the Inter-American Institute of Agricultural Sciences. We are participants as well in a multitude of inter-American institutions, the principal of which is the Inter-American Development Bank. Through our association with these agencies and bodies, Canada has acquired in a very few years a broad knowledge of Latin America's achievements

and potential. As a result, this continent is now much more closely associated in our eyes with our own concerns and priorities.

In 1972, we took the important step of acquiring permanent observer status in the Organization of American States. At that time, the OAS was on the verge of a deep re-examination of its own roles and functions as it sought to adjust to the dynamic evolution of Latin America. This re-examination is continuing, just as Latin America continues to change. We are watching the process with deep interest.

In addition, Canada has extended its support to integration efforts in the hemisphere. Among these are the activities of the Andean Group, which demonstrate the ability of dedicated governments to overcome crisis. The unique work of the Andean Group in pursuit of harmonized industrial development of its members is widely, and justly, applauded. I hasten to add, Mr. President, my awareness of your own dedication to the cause of Latin American co-operation and advancement.

These roles were chosen with care by Canada. They spell out, in our view, the strength of Canadian interest in hemispheric activity and emphasize as well the flexibility we believe is necessary at this time in order to permit our relations to mature most harmoniously and most beneficially. That flexibility permits us, for example, to play very active roles in both the Commonwealth, which claims six Caribbean area members, and l'Agence de Coopération culturelle et technique, which also has area interests. It is flexibility and the Canadian interpretation of how most effectively to co-operate with its neighbours and friends in the Group of 77 that led to the establishment of Canada's unique institution, the International Development Research Centre.

This body is funded in its entirety by the Canadian Government, but is directed by an international board representing ten countries in addition to Canada. It initiates, encourages, supports and conducts research into the problems of the developing regions of the world and into the means for applying and adapting scientific, technical and other knowledge to the economic and social advancement of those regions. It has, for the most part, concentrated its efforts on trying to improve the well-being of rural peoples. The Centre does this by making grants directly to institutions in the developing countries to permit them to do their own research and so to develop their own skills and the institutions so necessary to deal with their own problems.

At the present time, projects funded by this Canadian enterprise are under way in many Latin American and Caribbean countries. A

current project in Venezuela enables the University of Venezuela to evaluate a simplified-medicine program in rural areas. Some dozen other projects involve Venezuela in such diverse fields as low-cost housing, use of educational technology, forestry research and rural-urban migration.

The IDRC is intended to complement Canada's governmental institution for foreign economic assistance, the Canadian International Development Agency.

Canadian interest in Latin America is by no means restricted to Government activities. I am pleased, as I know you are, Mr. President, that at this very moment the Canadian Association for Latin America, an organization devoted to strengthening the links of business and other segments of the private sector, is holding its fifth annual conference here in Caracas. I cannot understate my enthusiasm for this event. A major source of the economic strength of Canada is derived from the business community. We count on this community, as you do, to play a vital role in the transfer of technology and other skills so necessary to permit the transformation of developing societies into viable members of the post-industrial age.

That task is one part of one of the most important efforts ever undertaken by the international community -- the adjustment of our economic order in order to permit an equitable sharing of benefits. This new order will not come into being without a mighty struggle. The struggle need not be marked by confrontation between countries, however. The confrontation that exists, and against which our efforts should be directed, is a confrontation with want, with disparity, with unfairness. In that struggle, I assure you of the commitment of the Canadian Government.

Canadians have long been familiar with economic disparities within their own country. The difference in *per capita* income varies several-fold from the richest regions of Canada to the poorest. Very sophisticated and very vigorous schemes have been introduced to provide for the transfer of funds from one region to another, and to provide incentive to industry to undertake new projects in depressed areas. We have gained much experience with these schemes, Mr. President, and some success. Our problems are derived not from the unwillingness of Canadians to contribute to the betterment of their less-fortunate neighbours but from the nature of Canada itself.

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I have referred several times, Mr. President, to our discussions here in Caracas. The importance of these cannot be overemphasized, for we both have the honour and the responsibility of leading the governments of democratic nations. Our views, therefore, must reflect the broad feelings of the people of our two countries. And, though this requirement of responsibility to our electorate requires us to be more cautious in our statements and less dramatic in our acts than others not so fettered, we both recognize that it is the source of the strength of our two great countries.

Our peoples are free -- free to travel, free to express their own cultures, free to design their own institutions, free to shape their own destinies. I believe fully that, in the exercise of those freedoms, the peoples of Canada and Venezuela will benefit increasingly from a more intimate association one with the other.

In that same speech to the Angostura Congress from which I quoted a few moments ago, Bolivar also said:

"We must never forget that the excellence of a government lies not in its theories or in its form or mechanism but in its being suited to the nature and character of the nation for which it is instituted."

And so our two governments, each designed for a different nation, seek to suit the nature and character of our own peoples -- but each seeks, equally, to reflect and serve the needs and interests of the world in which we live. To do so effectively requires perseverance, compassion and co-operation. To those characteristics, Mr. President, and to the good health of yourself and the Venezuelan people, I should like to propose a toast.

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