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NOTES FOR AN ADDRESS BY
MR. ANDRE OUELLET, PARLIAMENTARY
SECRETARY TO THE SECRETARY
OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,
TO THE FIRST REGULAR SESSION
OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE
ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES,
SAN JOSE, APRIL 15, 1971

I would like to express my gratitude for the privilege of addressing this first regular session of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States. This occasion has also afforded me the pleasure of seeing Latin America again, visiting for the first time this beautiful city of San José and experiencing the warm hospitality which is traditional in Costa Rica. I have listened with great interest and attention to the distinguished speakers who have outlined clearly the problems and aspirations we share in this hemisphere.

Last year we explained to the General Assembly the philosophy and thinking underlying the new orientation of Canadian foreign policy, referring particularly to my government's decision to intensify relations with our fellow countries in Latin America. This policy decision was prompted not only by a greater Canadian awareness of the Latin American fact, but also by our growing community of interests and the recognition that Canada must play a fuller part in the development of the hemisphere. We would like to translate these desires into practice by associating ourselves now with Latin American efforts in the area of social and economic development.

My intention in these brief remarks is not to set forth the various types of aid or the amounts we allot for development. For the moment I merely wish to assure you that we are directing an increasing proportion of our development assistance budget to countries in this hemisphere and that we have already visited several countries in order to identify the priorities of the governments concerned.

The goals we had set for intensifying our relations with Latin America are well on the way to realization. For example, we hope that negotiations now in progress will result in Canada's admission this year to several inter-American organizations.

We have discussed with the authorities of the Pan American Health Organization our role and obligations within this organization, and we expect that a formal Canadian application for membership will be submitted within a few weeks. We in Canada have a very high regard for the work of this organization and are looking forward to taking a full part in its activities.

Preparations for Canadian membership in the Inter-American Institute for Agricultural Sciences are also at an advanced stage. We had the honour of welcoming the institute's Director-General in Canada last year, and I had the pleasure of visiting him during my stay in San José. Our conversations confirmed to me that the institute would be a great help in the work we are trying to do in Latin America, since a large part of the Canadian effort is in the form of technical assistance in agriculture. We would like to contribute as much as possible to the work of the institute, and the information and services which would be made available through membership would help us to apply our aid programme more effectively.

Canada will also submit applications soon for membership in the Inter-American Institute for Social Security and the Inter-American Indian Institute.

Finally, we have studied the best method of co-operating more closely with the Inter-American Export Promotion Centre. During last November's visit to Ottawa by the centre's Director and in subsequent discussions we have been considering placing Canadian specialists at the centre's disposal. We recognize the importance of export promotion for the Latin American countries and we hope that Canada can make a useful contribution to the work of the Inter-American Export Promotion Centre.

This brief examination of the increasing institutional links between Canada and the rest of the hemisphere would not be complete without mention of our close co-operation with the Inter-American Development Bank, which for over six years has administered Canadian funds used for economic development in Latin America. We also participate continuously in the work of the Pan American Institute of Geography and History, the Inter-American Centre for Tax Administrators, the Centre for Latin American Monetary Studies and the Inter-American Statistical Institute. For a long time we have been a member of the Economic Commission for Latin America. We believe that Canada has a place in these specialized organizations and that it can play an even more important role, and we are now in the process of examining ways of attaining this objective.

Now I come to the crux of the matter of our co-operation with the other nations in the hemisphere. We believe that it is essential to establish satisfactory institutional links between us. You will therefore understand our hope that you will agree to the creation of a Canadian permanent observer mission to the Organization of American States.

We are looking for concrete ways to co-operate with you in the area of social and economic development. An observer mission would not only be accredited to and co-operate with the Organization of American States, but would also be an integral part of the Canadian governmental apparatus, committed to furthering our relations with this most important inter-American institution. It would be a bank of considerable technical knowledge on the mechanisms of co-operation in our hemisphere and an invaluable source of information for our guidance in allocating funds for Latin America. Decisions that Canada must make will be based on a better understanding of Latin American needs if we receive regular and documented information from the Organization of American States.

We believe that a Canadian observer mission would also be beneficial to the organization and its members. Closer co-operation with the Organization of American States is to us an important aspect of Canadian policy on Latin America.

We know that certain difficulties may stand in the way of this proposal, and we recognize and understand these problems. I therefore request your co-operation in reaching this goal. As the former Prime Minister of Canada, Lester B. Pearson, said in his report "Partners in Development": "It is our view that a world-wide co-operative campaign to set the developing countries on a path of rapid growth toward economic independence is a task within our range of accomplishment. It is a noble goal, to which mankind is called in the last third of the twentieth century."