



CANADA

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 69/13 LATIN AMERICA AND CANADA - PARTNERS IN A HEMISPHERE

Excerpts from an Address by the Honorable Mitchell Sharp, Secretary of States for External Affairs, at the Inauguration Ceremony, Fourteenth Congress of the International Institute of Latin American Literature, Toronto, August 24, 1969.

For many reasons, it gave me great pleasure to accept your invitation to open this Fourteenth Congress on Latin American Literature. Diplomacy and literature may not always be closely associated in the public mind; yet their practice has been united with distinction by many diplomats, and not least by those of Latin America. I am happy to say that we have several notable instances in Canada as well. I should like to think of my presence here tonight as due, at least in part, to this happy and mutually fruitful relationship....

This is, of course, the first time your Institute has held its Congress in Canada. It is highly appropriate that it should do so at the present point in history. Canada and Latin America share a hemisphere, but until a very recent period they went their separate ways in almost total mutual indifference. A Canadian business community has been active in many countries of Latin America, and Canadian missionaries, both Protestant and Roman Catholic, have made a substantial contribution to the religious life of Latin America. Latin America was known in Canada as a source of tropical products and dance music. These contacts, though not to be despised, led, it is hardly necessary to say, to each side's having a limited, one-dimensional, picture of the character and capabilities of the other.

In recent years, however, this situation has begun to change. Modern communications and transport have brought Canada and the Latin American countries much closer to each other in time and space. Trade between the two has increased and continues to increase substantially, and has diversified into almost every major field. Canadians have begun to visit Latin America in significant numbers, and more and more Latin Americans, travelling for business and pleasure, have come to know Canada directly. Most striking of all, the study of Latin America as an area and of Spanish and Portuguese language and literature, for long almost entirely ignored by Canadian universities, is now under way on a major scale. Several Canadian universities now offer well-rounded programs of Latin American studies, and many more offer courses in the Ibero-American languages and literatures. Canadians have gone in small but increasing numbers to Latin America to study in Latin American universities, and I am glad to say that the University of Toronto, our host, has pioneered in bringing Latin American students

and scholars to Canada. This trend was, as it were, formally recognized only two months ago, when the Canadian Association of Latin American Studies, a new learned society uniting scholars wholly or partly devoted to the study of Latin America in several disciplines, was established.

This increased awareness of Latin America, and particularly of Latin American culture, is a source of great satisfaction to me personally. I have had occasion to spend considerable time in Brazil and to become acquainted with some of the major works of Brazilian literature. As anyone must be, I was impressed by that literature's individuality, depth, and range of subject. This Congress will certainly bring the wealth and variety of Latin American literature to the attention of the public in Canada, and in so doing it will have made a significant contribution to greater mutual understanding of the peoples of the hemisphere.

This increased Canadian awareness of Latin America, as many of you already know, has been reflected in the policy of the Canadian Government. In May 1968, a review of all the major areas of Canadian foreign policy was requested by the Prime Minister. One of these areas was Latin America. Since that time, a task force of the ministers and officials concerned with Canadian relations with the area has been actively engaged in an exchange of views with both Latin Americans and Canadians in many fields. A mission at ministerial level visited nine Latin American countries and held talks with Latin American political, economic and cultural leaders. The task force is now in the final stages of preparing a report to the Government. This report has not yet been received or discussed by the Cabinet, and I cannot, therefore, comment in detail on its recommendations here, even if time allowed me to do so. However, I am able to assure you that the cultural dimension of Canadian relations has been in the forefront of the task force's thinking from the very beginning of the review. We believe that this is an area in which Canada can benefit greatly from increased contacts, as well as one in which it has something to offer. I expect that the policy review will inaugurate a new and far more active era of cultural exchanges between Canada and Latin America, exchanges of scientific and academic personnel and in the performing and creative arts. It will not, of course, be possible to do everything at once, particularly in view of the financial limitations within which the Government must work at present. Nonetheless, a new course has been set for Canada in this field, and I hope that as many as possible of those of you present tonight will in due course participate in the programs we hope to set up.

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