



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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CANADA AND LATIN AMERICA

A report to the House of Commons by the Secretary of State for External-Affairs, Mr. Howard Green, on May 30, 1960.

Perhaps the House will excuse me if I take a few minutes to give a short report of my trip. The purpose, of course, was to attend the celebrations commemorating 150 years of independence of Argentina and also while in South America to pay brief visits to Chile and Peru.

Roughly speaking, I had in mind furthering the goodwill between Canada and the Latin American countries and also endeavouring to learn something about our Southern neighbours.

I must say at once that I was very much impressed by all those countries which I had the good fortune to visit. Argentina is, I found, very similar to Canada. Of course, they have ranches producing wheat and cattle. They have the great port of Buenos Aires, one of the main ports of the world, and also they are active in the Antarctic just as we are in the Arctic. The population is slightly larger than that of Canada. Argentina ranks in the world today as a middle power, in the same status as our own nation.

There I had a very helpful conference with the President of Argentina and the Foreign Minister. In fact, I had two with the Foreign Minister, having been invited to dinner at the Brazilian Embassy with him by the Foreign Minister of Brazil, Hon. Mr. Lafer, who made such a friendly visit here a few months ago.

Argentina had over 90 delegations visiting the country for this celebration. That did not mean 80 foreign ministers; of course all the heads of delegations were not foreign ministers. It meant that they were entertaining five or ten times as many as 80, which is quite a big exercise, and they did it in an extremely efficient and friendly way. I think it did them great credit.

Of course one had opportunities for meetings and discussions with other representatives, other foreign ministers and other ministers and heads of delegations from various countries. As I

pointed out a moment ago, I had more than one occasion for discussions with Mr. Lafer, of Brazil.

Argentine Armed Forces

There were, of course, many important events. One was the celebration of the Te Deum in the Cathedral of Buenos Aires, which was a most impressive ceremony. A state dinner was given by the President and there was a military parade which took four hours to pass and which was extremely good. I was very much impressed by the young men of Argentina who participated in it. There were men not only from the navy but also they have marines; infantry and also paratroops, ski troops for the Antarctic and mountain troops for the Andes. They have a very impressive force. Also participating were small forces from the neighbouring countries and, significantly, forces from Spain were given the place of honour at the head of the parade.

In Buenos Aires they have one of the finest theatres in the world. It ranks, I think, as the third best in the world. There was an excellent ballet performance one evening with ballet companies from Paris, Buenos Aires and London.

There was one visit I paid which might be of interest ... It was to a school in Buenos Aires. They have two schools there, one elementary and one secondary, which are named Canada schools. I visited one of those schools. It was a holiday but the children had all been brought out to meet the Foreign Minister from Canada, and that was quite a test. I did not find out this was happening until the children had all gone home. There they were. They all wore white smocks, both the boys and the girls. They had a Canadian flag and the flag of Argentina. They sang songs and a very nice speech was made by one of the teachers but as it was in Spanish I did not get the full drift of it. In any event, this was a very wonderful lesson to me with respect to the way in which goodwill can be spread among the nations.

When I was speaking to the youngsters afterward I asked the girls whether their mothers washed their smocks or whether they did and they admitted that their mothers did. I said, "Don't you think that is terrible? Why don't you do it yourselves?" One little girl looked at me and said, "Who washes the smocks in Canada?" This had me floored and they laughed at that. One of these schools is affiliated with a school in Toronto and I am hoping that a secondary school will be affiliated with a high-school in the remarkable riding of Vancouver Quadra. Other schools are named after other countries. Our Ambassador is helping by getting reading material to these schools and to further understanding the children are supposed to write to children in Canada and vice versa.

Chilean Tragedy

In Chile I found great tragedy. I visited the Minister of the Interior, who is in charge of the relief measures. He told me they had over 500,000 people homeless in the stricken area, and with winter coming on and the season of heavy rain the whole situation is very serious for them. I also visited the Minister of Finance and the Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs. It will cost at least half a billion dollars to repair the damage that has been done. Roads have been destroyed. Homes, public buildings, wharves and harbours have been destroyed. They do not know what has happened to the harbours. Much of the shoreline in that part of Chile has been changed. New islands have come up out of the sea and old islands have been submerged. There are also four new volcanoes.

All this has happened in one of the country's very best regions, a district where they have their only steel plant and their only pulp and paper plant. People in the capital of Santiago could not get word of what had happened to their relatives in the earthquake zone. People were sitting outside the office of the Minister of the Interior trying to find out something about their relatives. We saw quite a few trucks heading south with bedding and all sorts of materials for the people there. On the airfield at Santiago there were huge United States "Globemasters". The United States at once flew two large mobile hospitals to Chile, these hospitals having over 250 beds each. Not only did I see "Globemasters" at Santiago, but there was also another at Antofagasta on my way north and at Lima, Peru, there were two or three more. From all over the world help was coming for these people.

The people of Chile have shown remarkable courage. The Ministers were under terrific pressure, of course, and had been working day and night. Disaster struck the country just when it was recovering from a very difficult period economically. They do not know how they will bring about rehabilitation under these conditions. This is the worst disaster they have ever suffered but I am sure that every Canadian, if he could be there, would admire the way in which the people of Chile are facing this tragedy.

Last Saturday night, I believe, 10 cases of clothing were shipped from Vancouver by the Canadian Red Cross through the courtesy of Canadian Pacific Airlines. Forty-eight cases of new, not used, clothing as well as medicines have also been sent to Chile by our Red Cross.

One of the most urgent requirements was for mobile hospitals of a smaller size. The large United States mobile hospitals were very helpful but it was difficult to get the injured people to the large centres. So the Chilean Minister of the Interior asked if we could send a small mobile field hospital. Through the co-operation of the Departments of National Defence and National Health and Welfare complete medical equipment for a 30-bed field hospital, together with

40 stretchers, 160 blankets and extra instruments and dressings, was dispatched Saturday afternoon and will be in Santiago tomorrow. In addition, 50,000 water-sterilization tablets, 10,000 penicillin and 10,000 tetracycline tablets and 40 pounds of refrigerated anti-tetanus toxoid and tetanus vaccine were also sent.

More Help Needed

I think further help will be needed and provision has been made for some help in the way of food. The Minister asked for flour and canned meats and 1 million pounds of canned pork has now been turned over to the Gold Cross by the Department of Agriculture and will be forwarded without cost to Chile. This pork is worth \$600,000. We shall be doing what we can to help in this very tragic situation and it may be that we will have to ask the house for authority to give further assistance. The Chileans were deeply grateful for help and, as I have said, help is coming from all over the world. This is one of the great disasters of our time.

I flew up the coast to Lima, Peru, on Friday afternoon. Lima was the seat of the Viceroy of the old Spanish days. It is a city of over a million people, as is Santiago; and Buenos Aires, of course, has between four and five million people. In Lima I had conferences with the President and with the Prime Minister. I met him on two occasions and had very useful talks with him. He has been in Canada and the United States and is doing an outstanding job. He is the owner of La Prensa, one of the leading papers in Lima. Incidentally, I also met Dr. Gainza Pas, the owner of La Prensa in Argentina. Both of these men have suffered for freedom of the press. Dr. Gainza Pas, as you know, fled Argentina a few years ago. His actions have been hailed all over the world and, of course, from coast to coast in Canada. The Prime Minister of Peru was in jail at one time because of the views he had put forward in his paper.

On Saturday afternoon we had a reception for Canadians in Lima. The delegation received an exceedingly warm welcome there as we did in each of the other places we visited.

In Mexico City yesterday I was met at the airport by Hon. Mr. Tello, the Foreign Minister. We had a very helpful talk. He drove me to the University of Mexico, which has 50,000 students and provides a good objective for Canadian universities in the way of buildings and developments of that type.

Brasilia

On the way down we landed for gas at Brasilia. It was planned to go to Rio, which we did eventually, but at that time it was fogged in and we landed first at Brasilia. This is the most impressive development I have ever seen. I had read a great

deal about it but that is different from actually seeing this brand-new capital carved out of the woods, with huge apartment buildings and government buildings that must have cost a great many millions of dollars. It will be a wonderful capital and it means so much to the people of Brazil as a symbol of their development and of the great nation they have become.

In all these countries our Canadian ambassadors and their staffs are doing a splendid job for Canada. In a very real way, they are in the front line in our relations with other countries, and I found them all doing a splendid job.

Role of Canada

All of these countries are very much interested in Canada. They are very friendly. Their outlook on world affairs is very much the same as our own. They place great value on their independence. They are all strong supporters of the United Nations and, as a matter of fact, each one of them has had a President of the United Nations - that is, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Peru and Mexico. I think one of them has had two Presidents of the United Nations. Canada has always enjoyed the co-operation of these countries in the United Nations, but they are deeply puzzled that Canadians do not seem to realize that Canada is a very important member of the Western Hemisphere family. I met this attitude everywhere I went, just a little feeling that Canadians are of the opinion they do not want to be too much involved with these Latin American nations.

I can only say to the House that each one of these countries would make a very staunch friend of Canada. They are all playing a very important part in world affairs, and they are steadily growing in stature. I believe it will not be very many years until there are more people south of the Rio Grande than there are north of it. I think that Latin America is on the move. These nations, as I have said, are very much like our own, and I believe are extremely important to Canada.

I cannot go farther than that with regard to Canadian policy at the moment. I do say this, however, that the policy of the Government has been and is to further improve the good relations which exist between Canada and the Latin American nations. For example, I plan to set up in the Department of External Affairs a Latin American Division. At the present time we only have a sub-division dealing with Latin American business, but it is far too important to be treated in that way. We have very much in mind the need for closer co-operation with these Western Hemisphere neighbours of ours and steps will be taken toward that end.