

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES



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Speech by the Honourable Paul Martin, Secretary of State for External Affairs, at the Canadian Inter-American Association Dinner, Ottawa, May 31, 1967.

It is a great pleasure for me to be with you this evening, at this dinner given by the President of the Canadian Inter-American Association for the diplomatic representatives in Canada of the Latin American and Caribbean countries.

I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Association, to its leaders, and to its work which, I am sure, will steadily grow in importance. Organizations such as the Canadian Inter-American Association, representing as it does a wide cross-section of those in Canada who are interested in Central and South America and the Caribbean, perform a most valuable service by adding an extra dimension to Canada's range of contacts with other countries.

Everyone here is, I am sure, well aware of how Canada's relations with Latin America and the Caribbean have so far developed, and what activities are now more or less commonplace. A brief summary of these relations would include the following items:

- (1) Diplomatic relations with all countries in the Hemisphere.
- (2) A significant trade with many of them, and substantial and growing investments.
- (3) Development assistance, in the form of loans made through the Inter-American Development Bank, programmes of aid for the Commonwealth Caribbean countries, and export-credit financing.
- (4) A common concern with international affairs, in which there is evidence of a fundamental similarity of outlook on most of the basic issues which face the world community.
- (5) Increasingly frequent participation in meetings of regional intergovernmental organizations such as the Economic Commission for Latin America, and in conferences of professional, scientific

and other learned societies organized on a Hemisphere basis.

With respect to this last item, I should like to note, in passing, that the Fourth Reunion of Central Bank Governors of the American Continent is now taking place near Montreal. We are delighted to have this meeting of Hemispheric significance in Canada this year.

I know that interest in the countries of the Americas is quietly growing in Canada -- for example, in institutes such as the host organization this evening, the Canadian Institute of International Affairs, and several universities, both French- and English-speaking. With the help of those of us, both Canadians and Latin Americans, who are in a position to increase knowledge and understanding of Latin America in Canada, interest in that part of the world should grow from coast to coast in the years ahead and, I should expect, will significantly increase in the immediate future.

I should like to look forward a little from here and give you some perspective from the Canadian point of view on the future development of Canada's relations with the rest of the Hemisphere.

First a word about the question of Canada joining the OAS. The fact that the Canadian Government has not yet decided to apply for membership in the OAS may be puzzling to some interested observers in Latin America. I should, nevertheless, hope that our attitude may meet with a large measure of understanding on the part of our Latin American friends, and that they will pay attention to what we are doing and seek to do, even if it falls short of applying for membership in the OAS at present.

It goes without saying that we in Canada are impressed by the constructive manner in which the OAS and its agencies are addressing themselves to the basic issues which confront Latin American countries at this time. I should like to suggest to you that, just as we in Canada respect the OAS, so the Canadian attitude toward the OAS is deserving of respect. It is by no means a negative attitude, for we are, in fact, co-operating with OAS agencies in a number of ways.

The fundamental reason for our not yet having decided to apply for membership in the OAS is our desire to be sure that, in taking on new commitments, we are in a position to meet them fully and effectively. We do not easily assume new obligations and, once we have assumed them, we take them seriously. For my part, I have no doubt whatsoever that membership in the OAS is part of the ultimate destiny of Canada as a country of the Western Hemisphere.

In the meantime we are adopting a pragmatic approach to the OAS and to our relations generally with the American countries. That our interest in the OAS and its work is growing is undeniable. Canada has for many years been a full member of three agencies linked with the OAS. Since 1961, we have sent observers to meetings of the Inter-American Economic and Social Council; during the past two years, Canada has been represented at three high-level meetings of leaders of OAS countries; and, as I have already indicated, we are supporting the work of the Inter-American Development Bank.

We are not content with this. We are constantly searching for additional ways in which we can co-operate in a practical manner with other countries in the Hemisphere, not only through multilateral channels such as the OAS and its agencies but also on a bilateral basis.

In discussing Canada's external relations in a Hemispheric context, I must, of course, make particular reference to the Commonwealth Caribbean, where we have special ties arising from historical and other factors. One of the Commonwealth Caribbean countries has now taken the step of joining the OAS, and others have expressed an interest in doing so. It is, I believe, fitting recognition of the developing contacts between the Commonwealth Caribbean and Latin America that the high commissioners of the Commonwealth Caribbean countries in Canada have been included in this gathering tonight.

There is nothing in Canada's special relationship with the Commonwealth Caribbean which is in any way exclusive. While we are anxious to do everything we can to strengthen the ties between the Commonwealth Caribbean and Canada, we fully recognize that these ties represent an integral part of our own Hemispheric relations, and we welcome the increasing contacts between the independent Commonwealth Caribbean countries and other countries of the Hemisphere.

Returning to the subject of the OAS, I should like to say a word about the recent meeting of heads of state at Punte del Este. We took a great interest in this meeting, at the open sessions of which there was a Canadian representative, and we were greatly impressed by its deliberations and by the possibilities of co-operative progress which it seems to open up. The main objective established by the meeting, the creation by 1985 of a Latin American common market, holds out great promise for the economic advancement of the Hemisphere.

We welcome Latin American efforts to further economic development and to increase the capacity of Latin American countries to participate in the growth of world trade through measures of regional co-operation and integration. While the precise implications for Canada of the proposed common market will become clear only as the project evolves, at this stage we take a positive attitude toward this emergent economic grouping, which is of great potential importance both for world trade in general and for the future development of our own commercial relations with the participating countries.

A more immediate plan for improving the trading position of developing countries, including the countries of Latin America, received support from President Johnson at Punta del Este. This is the plan, which has long been under discussion, to establish a globalized system of temporary preferences for the products of developing countries in the markets of all developed countries. We recognize the importance of President Johnson's decision to seek a consensus in favour of such a system, and we shall be studying the proposal carefully in the context of our continuing examination of various approaches to the problem of improving the trading opportunities of developing countries.

In conclusion, let me frankly assert one of the main reasons for my conviction that Canada must develop increasingly close relations with Latin America. This is the prospect that, between now and the end of the century, Latin America will become one of the most influential regions of the world.

The exact shape of things to come in Latin America is no more certain than in any other part of the world. The problems which already face Latin American leaders, and which may well be aggravated by a rapidly rising population as time goes on, are formidable and increasingly pressing. Yet a combination of constructive forces, already apparent, should serve to tip the balance toward success:

- (1) Sensible domestic policies designed to maintain economic momentum.
- (2) Readiness to adopt measures of regional economic co-operation, which will give strength to all participants.
- (3) Insistence on non-intervention as the necessary counterpart of the conscientious acceptance of responsibility by governments for the good government of their peoples.
- (4) Effective co-operation by outside countries and agencies in the economic development of the region.

More than 30 years ago, when I first entered Parliament, I developed a keen interest in Latin America. I have maintained that interest ever since. It is, therefore, a matter of satisfaction for me to see the growth of our relations with the countries of this Hemisphere, a development which, I am sure, will be of great benefit to us all.

S/C