



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

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Statements and Speeches No. 70/10

In the subtitle, instead of "First National Assembly of the Organization of American States", read "First Special Session of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States".

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CANADA

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CANADA AND LATIN AMERICA - A PERIOD OF MUTUAL DISCOVERY

Statement by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Jean-Pierre Goyer, to the First National Assembly of the Organization of American States, Washington, June 30, 1970.

... Permit me to begin, Mr. President, by extending the condolences of the Government and people of Canada to the Government and people of Peru, and especially to the families of the victims, on the occasion of the terrible earthquake that caused so much devastation and took so many lives. As the emergency-relief phase comes to an end, I can assure the Peruvian authorities that my Government will look with sympathy upon any request for assistance in the reconstruction of the devastated areas.

This meeting of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) is a historic occasion. It is an honour for Canada to be represented here, just as it is a privilege for me to be Canada's representative. I have listened with great interest to the distinguished speakers who have so far taken part in your general debate, and I am grateful to you for giving me the opportunity to say a few words. I have asked permission to speak because the Canadian Government has recently completed a general review of foreign policy from which has emerged Canada's future orientation toward Latin America and toward the Organization of American States. I should like to talk to you about this for a few minutes.

I believe that we have entered a period of mutual discovery by the people of Canada and the peoples of Latin America. We are already acquainted. We enjoy many contacts with one another, both bilateral and multilateral, both official and private, in the hemisphere and outside it; we can each cite statistics to prove that economically we are increasingly important to each other; and so on. Yet what is now beginning to take place transcends this. Certainly on the Canadian side the relatively few people who already know Latin America quite well are hopeful that henceforth their understanding of that part of the world will be conveyed to a great many other Canadians, who previously knew very little about Latin America, and that henceforth there will be a wider appreciation in Canada of our Latin neighbours. The more we learn about that part of the world, the more we feel in sympathy with the people who inhabit it. We sense that, with their rich historical and cultural

backgrounds, the people of Latin America are the kind of people we should like to know better, with whom we should wish to work in the pursuit of common objects. For us, in short, Latin Americans are a vital and imaginative people who have done important things and are destined to do more. In a word, we wish to build upon the communion de coeur that already exists, but at the same time we wish to strengthen in a more systematic fashion the community of spirit that is so essential and necessary to our relations with one another.

It follows that Canada's role must be played on a broad front -- political, cultural and economic. We already share common goals. Like you, we wish to safeguard sovereignty and independence and to work for peace and security in the world. We wish to consult and work with you in pursuit of these goals.

Again like you, we wish to enhance the quality of life of our people. In this area, in which there is much room for true reciprocity, we hope to co-operate more and more closely with the Latin American countries. In the realm of the arts (both popular and professional) -- films, television and other audio-visual techniques, academic and practical disciplines, and science and technology generally -- there are great possibilities for fruitful exchange in the years ahead.

At the same time, both Latin Americans and Canadians face the growing problem of determining which of the new technologies they really need. This is an area in which of us could learn from the other. Arbitrary application of scientific techniques can have harmful long-term effects in developing areas such as certain parts of Latin America; research into real needs and selective introduction of methods suitable to the social and physical environment are essential. Canada has similar problems, and it would find helpful a closer relation with Latin America in this sphere. At the same time, we hope that Canada's International Development Research Centre will be of assistance to Latin American governments.

It is in the practical field of social and economic development that Canada and the Latin American countries may increasingly find opportunities for constructive relations. It is not generally appreciated that in many ways Canada's heritage is similar to that of Latin America. Each is a vast territory, rich in natural resources, much of it undeveloped or even unexplored. Our populations are mainly European in origin, with varying admixtures of indigenous peoples and of immigrants from other parts of the globe. For more than three centuries, each in his own way, most of us have been adapting to new surroundings and striving to build a new society in a new world. In some ways we have all signally succeeded but in other ways we have all markedly failed. Of this I am sure - we have a community of problems, a community of aspirations and, in the last analysis, a community of human resources. I believe, therefore, that what we have in common most of all is a need and a determination to make it increasingly possible for the ordinary man and woman to enjoy the good life and to provide such a life for their children. All our governments agree on this as a fundamental goal of public policy. In Canada we speak of promoting social justice and of fostering economic growth; with enhancement of the quality of life, these are the policy aims to which the Canadian Government now attaches the highest priority in its conception of the national interest. In hemispheric terms, such aims

have been clearly and forthrightly set out in the revisions to your Charter, and they, in turn, are a reflection of the increase in the emphasis placed on social and economic development by the member governments of this Organization. We welcome this new statement of high principle, which is entirely compatible with what we consider to be the essence of our own policy review.

It is because Canadians share these ideals that my Government intends to increase, so far as its means permit, its contribution to your arsenal for peace. To this end, we should like to take a number of steps in the development-assistance field that will more than double our present allocation of funds to Latin America. Similarly, the Canadian Government would like to participate as a full member of five more inter-American organizations dealing with social or economic questions. In addition, because Canadians wish to foster economic growth, the Canadian Government is going to initiate measures designed to increase trade in both directions and to promote private investment in Latin America, although only in a manner which fully respects the policies and interests of host countries.

There remains the question of Canada's relations with the OAS. The Government has carefully considered the question of whether Canada should seek membership at this time and has decided that, while it may be that, in future, a Canadian Government will conclude that Canada should join, the best present course for Canada is to draw closer to individual Latin American countries and to selected institutions of the OAS and other inter-American institutions, thus preparing for whatever role it may in future be called upon to play in the western hemisphere and gaining the added experience that is indispensable in a complex milieu few Canadians yet know very intimately.

As you know, Canada already sends observers to some meetings of the Inter-American Economic and Social Council, the Council of Education, Science and Culture and the Committee of the Alliance for Progress, as well as of the IADB. Canada is a member of the Pan-American Institute for Geography and History, the Inter-American Centre of Tax Administrators and the Centre for Latin American Monetary Studies. The Canadian Government wishes to strengthen its links with these organizations.

In addition, Canada will seek full membership in the following inter-American organizations: the Pan-American Health Organization, the Inter-American Institute of Agricultural Sciences, the Inter-American Indian Institute, the Inter-American Conference on Social Security, and the Inter-American Export Promotion Centre. Canada will also contribute to the Inter-American Emergency Assistance Fund.

Finally, if the member countries of the OAS should be agreeable, the Canadian Government would be interested in establishing a formal link between Canada and the OAS at a suitable level. We should envisage a Canadian representative as having the status of a permanent observer. We should hope that he would be able to attend, on a continuing basis, meetings of inter-American bodies in which Canada had an interest and at which Canadian attendance would be appropriate. As the principal channel between Canada and the OAS, we should envisage his concerning himself with all aspects of inter-American affairs in which the Canadian Government might legitimately take an interest. We believe that such

an arrangement would do a good deal to improve Canadian knowledge and understanding of Latin America, and, in particular, of the OAS and other regional institutions of the hemisphere. At the same time, we hope that through this new relation our neighbours in this hemisphere will come to understand better Canadian aspirations and attitudes.

Those, Mr. President, are the principal ways in which, in co-operation with the Latin American countries, the OAS, its associated organizations and, as appropriate, Latin American regional institutions, the Canadian Government wishes in future to develop its relations with Latin America. More detailed information about our proposed programs and the thinking behind them may be found in a paper entitled Latin America, which is one of those recently issued by the Canadian Government following its foreign policy review....

It may be that what I have had to say today, even when considered with the Government's more detailed policy statement, will fall somewhat short of expectations in some quarters. If so, I can only suggest that it will be recognized that Canada is a middle power whose resources are stretched in a number of ways, and that it will be understood that it is the Canadian Government's desire to move as quickly and as constructively as possible in the direction of full co-operation in the hemisphere. It is in that spirit, Mr. President, that I venture to express the hope that, because of the happy coincidence in time of this OAS meeting and the recent announcement of certain aspects of Canada's future foreign policy, today's session may fairly be regarded as marking a new departure in relations between Canada and its fellow nations in the new world.

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