



Statements and Speeches

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CANADA AND THE STATES OF THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY

A Statement by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Don Jamieson, on the Occasion of the Signing of the Canada/CARICOM Trade and Economic Co-operation Agreement, Kingston, Jamaica, January 20, 1979.

The signing of this agreement is another historic step in the evolution of relations between Canada and the 12 CARICOM states. It is historic not least because the agreement once again sets a precedent in the relations each of us has with the world at large, a precedent first set well over a century ago. At that time, what was then the Province of Canada sought to negotiate a preferential tariff with what were the West Indies. And, not so long after, the Honourable George Foster, a minister in the first Government of Canada, as it is now constituted, visited the Caribbean region. This was the first direct government-to-government contact seeking to promote economic relations between our respective states. Since then, the economic relation between us has broadened and deepened, though outside events occasionally have had a negative effect.

Against this historic background, the conclusion today of the Canada/CARICOM Trade and Economic Co-operation Agreement thus becomes a moving and an exciting experience for a Canadian, as it is, I am sure, for my CARICOM colleagues charged with responsibility for their governments' external relations. The agreement is one between a concerted group of Commonwealth Caribbean states and an independent Canada. It is a successor to the 1925 agreement, which governed our relations for more than half a century. But times have changed. Long gone are the days of "wood, wind and water" in which Canadian timber and fish — much of it from my own Province of Newfoundland — were traded for the rum and molasses of the Commonwealth Caribbean. That earlier agreement served us well. During the past 50 years, varied and solid commercial links have emerged. Transportation modes have greatly developed. The movement of peoples has intensified; and despite world war and other international tensions, we continue not simply to share but to build our future on the rich language and heritage we jointly have from the past.

To some extent, what we are signing today is no more than a new and up-to-date framework with which to surround a productive set of exchanges already "in place". A good deal of the commercial content provided for by the new agreement exists. Nevertheless, the agreement is essentially a forward-looking one. It places heavy emphasis upon developing what are real and important prospects for industrial, technical and financial co-operation between us. Thus it does reflect the needs of the signatory states to define anew their relations, and to do so in terms of the rapidly-changing international economic environment.

We live in a world in which economic relations are not measured in terms of trade-flows alone. Rather, we look to the more complex connections created by investment-

flows, development assistance and the transfer of technology; and we recognize that, while governments as such can create conditions conducive to trade, investment and the like, ultimately the real content of our economic relations is the product of decisions and actions by individuals and organizations within our societies.

By mutual agreement, then, the intent of this new arrangement is to establish a flexible instrument, one that can meet changing needs in the future and not simply define in legalistic fashion the state of our relations at this moment. Moreover, it is an expression of political will and not just a contract between governments.

Indeed in this respect we are seizing this occasion to exchange letters that amplify this political will in a number of respects. Specifically, for example, we are making [it] clear that the Canadian Government stands ready to consider appropriate amendments to the agreement in the event that its terms require adjustment to take account of any new internationally-accepted trading arrangements for developing countries.

We have also undertaken that, where feasible of course, we shall consult with CARICOM in advance of any changes in existing Canadian tariff margins of preference affecting CARICOM interests. Our partners in the agreement have undertaken to do likewise with us in respect of changes in their trading systems. The exchange of letters also makes [it] clear that our co-operation with CARICOM on a regional basis — utilizing, for example, the facilities of the Caribbean Development Bank — need not detract from the totality of Canadian bilateral assistance to the region.

I said that we take a broad view of this new agreement. It is precisely because of this that I am accompanied today by members of Canada's Parliament, both Government and Opposition parties. This is a mark of the broad significance we attach to relations with CARICOM states.

The agreement, however, is much more than a broad and general framework for the future evolution of Canada-CARICOM ties. It breaks new ground in a number of specific areas, particularly with respect to industrial co-operation. This is a facet of international economic relations of overriding importance in the world today, although the conception that underlies it is relatively new. Indeed, Prime Minister Trudeau, at the Commonwealth heads-of-government meeting in 1975 here in the Caribbean, proposed — and other Commonwealth leaders agreed — that a special study of industrial co-operation be undertaken to encourage the development among Commonwealth members of this mechanism of particular relevance to the developing world. In the same spirit, the agreement we are signing today has a separate protocol on industrial co-operation that we hope will lead quickly to increased transfers to CARICOM states of human and other resources so necessary to continuing progress in the development and diversification of your economies and of benefit in strengthening and improving our own economy.

Our first step, as the protocol indicates, is for governments to identify those sectors in which investment and technological transfers are desired and necessary from your point of view and where corresponding Canadian capability exists. Ultimately, though,

the procedures envisaged will lead to direct communication and contact between the Canadian private sector and potential users within CARICOM. That is our mutual goal. Precisely because it is the private sector in Canada that eventually must undertake the industrial co-operation this agreement provides for, I am also accompanied today by senior executives of a number of Canadian companies with interests in finance, manufacturing generally, food-processing and the like.

Of course, Canadian business is not new to the Caribbean. Several firms represented here today have been well-established in the region for many, many decades. Looking ahead, however, if we are successful in promoting industrial co-operation as we wish to, a whole host of new kinds of activity in the region, undertaken jointly by Canadian and CARICOM interests, is easily imaginable. There is surely scope for such co-operative ventures in agriculture, fisheries, light manufacturing, such as furniture and housing components, trade, and various financial and other service industries — provided that, on both sides, governments create the conditions in which Canadian private enterprise will feel that such industrial co-operation here is attractive and worth while to all.

In Canada, we are elaborating at the present time the kinds of economic development policy appropriate to the 1980s. We are doing so not simply to respond to the economic difficulties the world has known over the past few years but rather because we recognize, as do others, that international competitive forces are shifting, and new strategies are needed if we are to enjoy satisfactory and stable economic growth in the decade ahead. This agreement I view as one of the instruments we need in meeting the increasingly-competitive challenges of the 1980s.

You, too, are giving greater precision to your development plans. Together, we should lose no time in putting this agreement into practice. I want to propose to my CARICOM colleagues, therefore, that the first meeting of the joint committee provided for under this agreement be held in Canada within the next couple of months, so that it will begin to attempt to identify individual sectors and opportunities for possible industrial co-operation. I should hope that the committee could meet again within, say, 12 months, perhaps this time at the ministerial level, to provide such impetus as is necessary to permit co-operative ventures inspired by this agreement to proceed.

I referred earlier to the historic nature of this agreement, and have mentioned some of its more immediate consequences in bilateral terms. In this context, the agreement goes beyond traditional forms of development assistance; and it is novel, I suggest, in the way in which it is intended to support CARICOM objectives of regional economic integration. Moreover, the agreement is, I believe, the first of its kind entered into by CARICOM with an individual country; and it is a first for Canada in that it deals with a group of states of the developing world. For all these reasons, and given the importance attached by both of us to the "North-South dialogue", we take pride, as I hope you do, in initiating this new form of co-operation.

It comes at a time, of course, when the world at large is focusing more attention on

the Caribbean. A most conspicuous recent example was the launching of the Caribbean Group for Co-operation in Economic Development, associated with the World Bank. This group, which met first in Washington last June, was successful not only in attracting new outside donors but also in providing greater precision on the needs of the region, as seen by Caribbean governments themselves. As a result, informal co-ordination of the efforts of those within the Caribbean and those outside will now be undertaken to promote economic development of this area in a more orderly and effective fashion.

In many respects, Canada's motivation in signing this agreement today is the same as that which inspired our participation in the Caribbean Group in Washington. Our interest in the economic progress of Caribbean states, both Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth, has been evident in the past; but we want to confirm that this interest continues and our new agreement does just that.

The agreement comes as a number of new island nations enter history. Dominica recently attained independence, and I take this occasion through my colleague from Dominica to wish the people of his country happiness and prosperity for the future. Several more Commonwealth Caribbean countries will emerge shortly.

Independent they are, or will be, as is Canada, but we are all linked through our Commonwealth association. This association provides an added reason why Canada looks forward to closer co-operation with CARICOM governments in future. We accept, as Commonwealth countries, that we must share, contributing as we can, in the resolution of difficult world problems affecting all of us.

I have had occasion during the past year to meet with my CARICOM foreign minister colleagues, in New York and elsewhere — including this morning —, to exchange views on such difficult international questions as southern Africa, on such common problems as the law-of-the-sea negotiations, and on mutual objectives in North-South discussions. In the broadest international sense, then, agreements of the kind we are signing today both bolster and contribute to the sense of solidarity that binds Commonwealth members.

At a different level, that of the individual, this agreement will, I think, be particularly welcome to what is now a large and growing segment of Canadian society — those of Caribbean origin. Some 15,000 or so immigrants from CARICOM states have entered Canada in each of the last few years. They enrich Canadian society beyond the weight of their numbers, and I am pleased that there is now a new formal yet flexible tie between their new and their old homelands.

There are other people-to-people links between CARICOM and Canada. Students from the Caribbean have found a welcome in Canadian universities, and as a result have developed ties with Canada of a lasting character even though they returned to take their place in your societies. And Canadians migrate seasonally to your beautiful beaches and countryside, sometimes comprising the largest segment of your tourist population.

To return to our bilateral economic relations as such, there have been significant developments of late. In 1977, for example, trade between CARICOM states and Canada was just about in balance for the first time. Let us hope that, through the trade- and industrial-co-operation aspects of this new agreement, we shall move forward to new and balanced levels of economic co-operation in the broader and more complex sense I earlier spoke of.

A century ago, when Newfoundland fish moved south and rum was the principal good moving north, the ties we had were very important to both of us. Today, while trading patterns have greatly changed, there is no strain in our relations. Nor does this new agreement constrain our separate relations with the rest of the world. On the contrary, it can help us both obtain the wider window on the world that is essential today. In the current international economic climate, which is by no means as salubrious as your atmospheric climate, we must all diversify our economic relations, we cannot turn within.

What better choice can Canada and CARICOM states make in such circumstances than to strengthen existing ties of friendship, tradition and commerce between them? I believe this agreement will be an important step in such a natural process.