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CANADA AND THE O.A.S.: THE STILL VACANT CHAIR

WHILE THERE HAVE BEEN (and are) significant and sometimes serious differences between Canada and the United States on questions of foreign policy, Latin-American issues have not been prominent in such areas of disagreement. But although Ottawa and Washington have had few disagreements on Latin-American matters, their policies toward the area, for reasons of history and geography—those omnipresent ingredients of foreign policy—, have been quite different.

Canadians have perhaps grown tiresome by declaring so frequently that their interests and traditions make the Northern Hemisphere a more meaningful entity than the Western Hemisphere. More precisely, their ties with some of the lands of Western Europe have always been maintained and generally cherished. Although their progress towards independence was not without stress and strain, they have had no traumatic or dramatic revolutionary episode upon which to focus their nationalist emotions. Regarding British institutions such as the Royal Navy with considerable favour, they were not enthusiastic about policies designed to exclude outside powers and influence from the Western Hemisphere.

Until recent times most Canadians have thought of Latin America as a remote and distant part of the world. Their contacts with the area and its people were slight, their knowledge scant. Devoting their energies to filling and then developing their Western plains and subsequently their vast north-land, achieving independence from Britain and safeguarding it from the United States, they had little capacity or desire to extend their range of interest south of the Rio Grande.

In geographic, if not geopolitical terms, the bulk and proximity of the United States made it difficult for Canadians to see through and beyond it to the peoples in the southern portion of this hemisphere. They sometimes say that although Americans are benevolently ill-informed about Canada, Canadians are malevolently well-informed about the United States. While it was impossible not to know and be concerned about the postures and policies

of the immediate neighbour, there was, however, little incentive or opportunity to know the peoples of the other lands in the Hemisphere. The closest contacts, for special reasons, were with the West Indies.

Even French-speaking Canadians—who could themselves qualify as Latin Americans—developed few ties with the Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking countries to the south except in the field of missionary work, in which Quebec churchmen made (and are still making) important and valuable contributions to the cultural and religious life of a number of South American republics.

Travel between Canada and Latin America was slight: regular direct passenger-ship service was generally not available, and even in the air age it is only recently that anything approaching adequate transportation links have been established.

Few Canadians read or speak Spanish or Portuguese. Communication media have not given prominence to Latin-American news, and even today few Canadian newspapers have correspondents in South or Central America. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's International Service is an excellent and extensive operation, but its Latin-American coverage is quantitatively low. On the other hand, while the Ottawa Parliamentary Press Gallery has representatives of British, American, French, German, Russian, Chinese, and Scandinavian newspapers or news services, it has none from Latin America.

It was not until after the first Great War that Canada assumed full responsibility for the conduct of its own foreign policy; and, in fact, some Washington diplomats did not recognize the fact of Canada's functional independence until after the Second War. Priority of foreign interest was indicated in the order in which diplomatic missions were established. Washington, Paris, and Tokyo came relatively early. (London in a sense was already long established.) Not until 1941 was the first embassy opened in a Latin-American country. For some years there were only a few, and not until 1961 was there full representation with all of the republics. It should be pointed out that a shortage of trained personnel in the Department of External Affairs also contributed to the slow growth of diplomatic representation in Latin America.

It was in the late 1940s that Canadian relations with Latin America became close and meaningful. In the United Nations, Canadians and Latin Americans worked closely together, and Canada seemed sometimes to be regarded as an honorary member of the Latin-American caucus. (The League of Nations served no such useful purpose. A number of Latin-American states

never became members, some left the organization, and Canada was certainly something less than a dedicated member.)

Visits by Canadian Ministers, trade missions, Canadian membership in such bodies as the inter-American Radio office, the inter-American Statistical Institute, and the Pan-American Institute of Geography and History, and participation by observers at other inter-American meetings helped to strengthen the ties of interest and concern.

In 1961, Canada became a full member of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America, and we have begun to extend our economic aid through various channels. In 1961, also, it was the writer's privilege to be a member of an observer delegation headed by a Cabinet Minister in attendance at the special meeting of the Inter-American Economic and Social Council at which the splendid Alliance for Progress programme was launched. Since then, Canada has been represented at regular meetings of IA ECOSOC, and we are sincerely hopeful that the Alliance for Progress will become an alliance of Progress as well.

Canada's external aid is contributed largely through international organizations or agencies rather than in bilateral arrangements. As an under-developed region, Latin America receives some assistance from contributions to technical assistance and other economic aid programmes of the United Nations. There has also been an extension of "soft loans" for purposes of development.

Canadian trade with Latin America is not insignificant. In the two decades since the end of the second World War, Canadian trade with the twenty republics of Latin America has more than trebled. The value of exports has risen from \$92.6 million in 1946 to \$315.7 million in 1965. It should be noted, however, that the rate of growth in exports has just about matched the overall growth of Canadian exports. The area as a whole buys as much from us as does Japan, our third largest single customer. Latin America supplied 4.8% of our total imports in 1965. Venezuela alone is our third largest supplier, exceeded only by the U.S.A. and the United Kingdom. Total Canadian imports from Latin America in 1965 were valued at \$411.8 million.

The statistics indicate that while our trade with Latin America is growing, it is not at present an area of exceptional growth. It is hardly necessary to say that Canada will welcome an increase in trade with Latin America, will assist as it can the self-development programmes of various under-developed countries, and that Canada looks forward to the successful growth and develop-

ment of the Latin American Free-Trade association and the Central American Common Market. There are already some substantial Canadian-owned commercial and industrial establishments in Latin America; Canadian businessmen are being encouraged to look to Latin America, and Latin Americans are beginning to use trade commission promotional techniques in Canada. The prospects for increased economic contacts between Canada and Latin America are good.

Perhaps more important than diplomatic or economic relations are the personal contacts. In this area there is vast room for improvement. Canada should strengthen cultural contacts. There should be more exchanges of students and teachers. Only a beginning has been made in establishing centres of Latin-American studies in Canadian universities. Politicians have some contacts through the inter-parliamentary union, and more could be done in this area between and among Latin-American republics and Canada.

The famous twenty-second chair has been in storage these many years in the Pan-American-Union Building. It bears the name CANADA and what was in 1912 regarded as the "coat of arms" of Canada, but it has never felt the impact of any Canadian seat. Why this chair has so long been unoccupied may not be one of the most important unanswered questions in international diplomacy, but it is certainly one of the oldest. One astute Canadian has given a most succinct explanation of our failure to join the hemisphere-grouping now known as the Organization of American States: "For many years we could not join because we were not invited—later we were not able to join because we were invited!"

For some time after the birth of the organization, Canada was ineligible for the simple reason that it was something less than a fully independent state. Even at the time of the opening of the Pan-American-Union Building in 1912, it was still a colony and not entitled to membership in an association of sovereign states. It should be recalled, however, that even if our quasi-independent status had not precluded joining, the attitude of the United States would have prevented it. In 1889, Secretary Blaine had said: "The fact is we do not want any intercourse with Canada except through the medium of the tariff and she will find she has a hard row to hoe and will ultimately, I believe, seek admission to the Union."

To Washington's hostility was added the awkward fact that, in an association of republics, Canada's form of government was itself somewhat of

a disqualification. It is, therefore, difficult to understand why, in 1910, State Secretary Elihu Root ordered that the Canadian Chair and other appurtenances of membership be provided in the new Pan-American Building. Certainly in the years following there was no disposition in Washington to encourage Canada to join the organization, and on more than one occasion Latin-American enthusiasm for such a move was quickly chilled by the State Department.

In 1928, a year after the establishment of direct diplomatic relations between Washington and Ottawa, State Secretary Kellogg included this opinion in his instructions to the U.S. delegation to the 6th International Conference at Havana:

If colonies, possessions or dominions whose foreign relations are controlled by European states, were represented in these conferences, the influence and policies of European Powers would be injected into the discussion and disposition of questions affecting the political entities of this hemisphere.

Space does not permit a full discussion of the efforts made to invite Canada to join the hemispheric system or to discourage the Dominion from doing so. One thing is clear in the confused account of invitations expected and not delivered: the United States almost to the end of the war successfully frustrated any Latin-American effort to have Canada brought into the club. In 1941, our Minister of Trade and Commerce returned from a Latin American tour and told Canadians that "all South America wanted Canada in the Pan-American Union". But if this was their desire it was not fulfilled.

Prime Minister Mackenzie King, in 1942, said somewhat plaintively: "There have been times quite recently when we might have expected invitations, but were given reasons why it should not be advisable to have an invitation extended . . . reasons which I cannot explain publicly". Mr. King, more the reader than the leader of public opinion, was probably not too much disturbed, since there was no clear or overwhelming desire among Canadians for membership in the hemispheric organization.

From the internationalist outlook of the United States in the immediate post-war period there finally emerged a genuine desire for Canada to join the inter-American organization. The influential Senator Vandenberg expressed the wish

that the time may soon come when our continental fellowship will be geographically and spiritually complete through the association with us on some appropriate

basis of the great and splendid Dominion of Canada. . . . By every rule of righteousness she is eligible. . . . By every rule of reason we should wish her here. I would welcome the final and total New World unity which will be nobly dramatized when the twenty-second chair is filled and our continental brotherhood is complete from the Arctic circle to Cape Horn.

But there had been too much delay in putting out the welcome mat. Canadian interest—never really intense—had cooled considerably, and Prime Minister King requested President Truman not to press an invitation. Canada's major foreign-policy interests were expressed in becoming a charter member of NATO and of the UN, and these have retained a very high priority.

In 1960 President Kennedy spoke to a joint session of both Houses of the Canadian Parliament and extended a strong, clear invitation:

"I believe that all the free members of the organization of American States would be both heartened and strengthened by an increase in your hemispheric role. Your skills, your resources, your judicious perception at the Council table even when it differs from our views are all needed throughout the inter-American community. Your country and mine are partners in North American affairs; can we not become partners in Inter-American affairs?"

After that, there was no reason to believe that Canada was unwanted. It is possible, however, that private representations might have been more helpful to the cause of membership than public exhortation.

On the question of Canadian membership in the OAS the Latin-American states are at one with their Northern neighbour. In 1959, the Honourable Sidney Smith, reporting to the External Affairs Committee of the House of Commons after an extended trip to Latin America, said: "I would ask if there are better and more efficient ways of showing our interest and friendship; but in Latin-American eyes none . . . would equal our joining the OAS." In 1961, his successor, the Honourable Howard Green, said of Latin-American leaders: "They place great emphasis on the OAS and in some cases find it hard to understand why Canada is not a member". There is every indication that this continues to be the prevalent feeling in Latin America. But in any case the invitation has not yet been accepted, although Ministerial heads of the Canadian Department of External Affairs have appeared over the last decade or more to be sympathetic to Canadian membership in the OAS.

Being eligible and invited, will Canada join?

The present Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Paul Martin, declared in 1964 that "Canadian membership in the OAS is part of the ultimate destiny of Canada as a country of this hemisphere". But, so far, Canada has been a long time attaining her destiny, and it must be assumed that there are some reasons for continued non-membership:

1. There is evident lack of widespread desire for membership. Although the best that can be said of public opinion polls is that "they are not always wrong", there is significance in a survey which "found" in 1947 that 72 per cent of Canadians had never heard of the Pan-American Union. It is, therefore, not a popular political issue and has not often appeared in party platforms.
2. Some Canadians are of the opinion that involvement in what they might call Latin-American disturbances (e.g. in Cuba and the Dominican Republic) would limit their effectiveness. Better, they believe, to keep out of these eruptions which, so long as they are not OAS members, do not concern them. Especially do they feel anxiety where it appears that collective action through OAS machinery followed the *fait accompli* of U.S. action. The Bay of Pigs incident was regarded with the outmost disfavour by most Canadians, and opinion on the Dominican intervention was sharply divided, although the majority accepted the action as regrettable but preferable to other possible alternatives.
3. In an earlier day there were those who believed that OAS participation would in some way weaken Canadian Commonwealth status and stature.
4. Some Canadians have expressed fear that they might be placed in the position of having to disagree with the United States or, if they agreed, would be accused of acting as mere advocates for the U.S. point of view.
5. It is believed—and this is the only "anti" argument that commands the present writer's respect—that Canada may not have the resources to become a full participant in OAS activities and continue to play its full part in other areas of the international scene.

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It is more satisfying for a long-time advocate of Canadian membership in the OAS to enumerate the reasons which he believes should prompt Canada's early occupancy of that too-long-vacant chair.

While there is no great surge of opinion in favour of OAS membership, there is no large body of opinion opposed. No government would suffer the slightest political reverse if it led Canada into the organization. To use the jargon of the day, there is no need to fear either a backlash or a frontlash from an aggrieved section of the electorate.

With its tremendous potential growth in population and developed resources, the southern part of this hemisphere is bound in the years ahead to play a decisive role in world affairs. A forward-looking foreign policy would seek to strengthen Canadian ties with this area and to assist in the solution of the serious economic and social problems facing its peoples.

In the space age there are no areas from which Canada can be insulated or isolated. If trouble erupts in Latin America and spreads to wider, graver proportions, Canada will be involved whether Canadians sit on the governing board of the OAS or not. It is realism and not airy idealism to suggest that Canadians make such contributions as they can to the consultative machinery now existing for hemispheric diplomacy. Like Milton, they "cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue" or feel content with what they may regard as American or OAS mishandling of crises or near-crises.

Many years of being concerned about developing and maintaining our Canadian identity have brought the conclusion that we no longer need fear absorption or doubt our ability to survive as an entity distinct from the U.S.A. Certainly, while we must recognize the realities of a "great-power" world, Canada has asserted and must continue to assert the right to disagree with the U.S.A. on matters of foreign policy. (Cuba is a case in point.) Canada continues to maintain diplomatic and commercial relations with Cuba (as of course do many members of the OAS). To Canadians the maintenance of diplomatic recognition is normally not correlated with approval of the particular form of government in power in any country.

Presumably, Canadians do not regard the diplomatic or commercial isolation of Cuba by Canada as being in the interest of Canada, of the people of Cuba, or of world peace generally. Canadian trade with Cuba is not large: exports in 1964 were valued at \$60,930,000; in 1965, at \$52,594,000. The value of imports was much less: \$3,464,000 in 1964, and \$5,304,000 in 1965.

It should be pointed out, however, that the Canadian Government has

prohibited the sale of arms and strategic goods to Cuba for some time. It also strictly enforces controls designed to prevent Canada from being used as a back door to avoid United States laws. The Prime Minister, the Right Honourable L. B. Pearson, has said:

I assure you that insofar as our trade relations with Cuba are concerned we are not shipping anything to Cuba that is on the Allied Prohibited List, nor are we allowing Canada to be used as a base for the shipping of machinery and stuff of that kind from the USA via Canada to Cuba. We have exercised and will continue to exercise all the controls we can on that kind of trade.

Canada's unfettered right to disagree is as important to the U.S. position before the world as it is to Canadians. There is, therefore, little reason to be patient with the view that Canada should stay out for fear of incurring the displeasure of the U.S. or the Latins. If this psychology were to prevail Canada would surrender membership in all international organizations.

Membership in the Commonwealth is still meaningful to Canadians, and they take some pride in the fact that their statesmen were most influential in its development from an Empire to an association of autonomous, equal states. Canadians should look forward to the day when they will join other Commonwealth states in assuming OAS membership. The former British West Indies islands have a special place in Canada's external relations, and close commercial ties especially with the eastern Canadian provinces have existed for many years. In particular reference to the smaller islands (about to assume independence), Canada has unique opportunities and a special challenge, and it might usefully be considered whether external aid should be less widely but more intensively directed. It is to be hoped that Canada will extend to the smaller islands, particularly, all possible aid in whatever form they will accept. The viability of their political and economic institutions is somewhat precarious. Their problems are immense. Their goodwill is great. There is good reason to believe that these small Caribbean communities will spur a resurgence of Canadian interest and participation in the area, and prompt Canada to look southward.

As a part of the process it is to be hoped that Canada will join her friends in full membership of the OAS.