

FOCAL - UPDATE

A Report of Activities

January 1999

What's New at FOCAL?

Our vision for the future

Having completed a year as Executive Director of FOCAL, I look back on the fall of 1998 as an exciting period of consolidation of FOCAL's team, its networks and its positioning for the future. During this period there were important developments in Latin America, the Caribbean and in Canada's role in the Western Hemisphere. I am pleased to provide you below with current perspectives on FOCAL and its programs.

As North Americans, we can no longer narrow our hemispheric outlook to a southward focus on Latin America and the Caribbean. Canada is now increasingly defined as a nation of the Americas, where interests and policy priorities are converging. The nations of Latin America and the Caribbean have a heightened interest in stronger political and economic ties with their neighbours, including Canada, and their global partners. Given Canada's growing involvement in the Americas - one of the world's most dynamic regions politically, economically and culturally - FOCAL is poised to make a significant contribution in this new two-way engagement.

The next two years will mark a new phase of Canada's political identity as a player in inter-American relations. Canada will host five major hemispheric events: the Pan-American Games; the annual Summit of the First Spouses of the Americas; the annual meeting of the Trade Ministers of the Americas with the Americas Business Forum; the 30th General Assembly of the Organization of American States; and the Third Summit of Heads of State of the Americas.

In order to strengthen the policy response to these events and to Canada's changing role, the Board and staff of FOCAL agreed, in the fall of 1998, to adjust the organization's programs and range of policy priorities. Our vision for the future is to function primarily as a policy centre, with a view to developing greater understanding of important hemispheric issues in order to help build a stronger community of the Americas. The years ahead offer an unique opportunity to increase FOCAL's status, resources and influence through a focused selection of initiatives.

By involving experts, we will develop analysis for the Canadian policy community on the key issues affecting the Americas. Our team of policy analysts will study the range of issues in our four programming areas:

- Inter-American Relations
- Governance and Human Security
- Social Policies
- Economic Integration

We will convene decision-makers, opinion leaders and experts to policy dialogues and debates. Through our publications and outreach programs, we will engage and inform policy-makers in the public and corporate sectors as well as academics, members of the

Canadian media and special interest groups. We will also seek to maintain our relevance to Canada's regions by finding new approaches to engage expertise on the Americas from across Canada.

The fall in review

The Board of Directors has welcomed John Graham of the International Foundation for Elections Systems and Trevor Bartram of Emerging Markets. While reviewing its direction this fall, FOCAL also welcomed new staff. To better access the policy community, FOCAL's new Communications Manager, Lucie Lafrance, will be responsible for media and outreach activities. Martin Roy and Florencia Jubany have joined the team of policy analysts. Stacey Wilson-Forsberg, who recently completed a FOCAL internship at the Organization of American States, joins FOCAL as Assistant Policy Analyst. James Buchanan and Stéphane Roberge, who both study at the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs at Carleton University, are our Spring interns. I invite you to review the enclosed staff list.

As you will see in this newsletter, FOCAL organized two major conferences in the fall, in addition to smaller meetings, providing opportunities to discuss and debate specific issues such as: the Free Trade Area of the Americas; the conflict in Chiapas Mexico, growing public insecurity and crime in the Americas; and the participation of civil society in multilateral decision-making. These events drew a wide cross-section of interested participants from across the hemisphere. FOCAL also strengthened its partnerships with many Canadian public and private sector organizations as well as policy centres in the Americas. We continued to widen the support for our mission by diversifying our funding base and involving new partner organizations in our work.

We thank the Canadian International Development Agency, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development and the International Development Research Centre for their financial support to our activities throughout the fall. We also thank all those individuals and organizations who have collaborated with us in this busy period.

Our agenda for 1999 is quickly filling up with new challenges. You will find outlines of our upcoming activities and publications later in this newsletter. I hope you enjoy this report and can participate in our work in the future.

DENIS LECLERC, Executive Director

Educational Reforms in the Americas

Educational reforms in the Americas and Canada's contribution was the theme of this major conference held by the Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL) in Toronto on November 19-21, 1998.

Among the 150 participants were representatives from Canadian provincial ministries of Education, ministries of Education of Chile and Argentina, the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Canadian International Development Agency and federal departments, teachers' unions, professors and students from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, a large group of Chilean school principals, and experts in education from across the Americas.

The objectives of the conference were to learn about, discuss and debate educational reforms being planned and implemented in the Americas, and the Canadian implementation of the Plan of Action for Education adopted by 34 Heads of State at the Santiago Summit of the Americas in April 1998. This was a significant opportunity for representatives of various organizations in the hemisphere to meet and discuss educational reforms after the Santiago Summit, and the first such meeting in Canada.

The problems of quality of education, insufficiency of funds, inequitable distribution of resources, and difficult working conditions were among the main concerns highlighted at the meeting. José Octavio Bordón, Senior Visiting Fellow at the Inter-American Dialogue and the conference's keynote speaker, discussed the political aspects of educational reforms in Latin America and the Caribbean. He emphasized the need for investment in education and for strong political leadership to address this major development challenge for the region.

Education experts from Chile and Argentina discussed the sweeping reforms being implemented in their countries through processes of decentralization, privatization, extension of the school day, and the use of assessment and evaluation procedures. Other topics at the conference included indigenous education, reforms in Canada, the role of civil society and of major multilateral banks in promoting and implementing reforms, and a multilateral education reform program led by the Inter-American Dialogue in Washington. The participants also reviewed a draft framework for international cooperation programming in education developed for the Canadian International Development Agency.

The need to respect local realities, and involve teachers and the community in implementing the reforms, was emphasized throughout the conference. The participants indicated that cooperation in education between Canada and other countries should be based on an exchange of expertise and a sharing of information, rather than exporting Canadian solutions that might not be appropriate elsewhere. They also acknowledged the need for an inter-American forum to exchange ideas and share experiences in educational reforms as a follow-up to the commitments made in Santiago.

The conference was sponsored by the Canadian International Development Agency and the Assessment of Social Policy Reforms Initiative of the International Development Research Centre. The Hispanic Development Council of Toronto co-hosted the reception and keynote address on November 19th. The Council is the umbrella organization for agencies providing services to the Spanish speaking community in the Greater Toronto Area. A report of the conference will be available in 1999.

¿Una Gran Familia? Hemispheric Integration **After the Santiago Summit**

At the Summit of the Americas held in Santiago, Chile in April 1998, Canada and 33 other countries in the Western Hemisphere agreed to negotiate the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) by the year 2005. Since Canada chairs the FTAA negotiations through 1999, a conference on October 1-2, 1998 provided an early opportunity to discuss the prospects for economic integration within the hemisphere. The conference, which was attended by over 110 people, was co-hosted by FOCAL, the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs at Carleton University and the Embassy of Chile in Canada.

Representatives from South and North American countries discussed the degree of

commitment of their respective governments to the FTAA process, what each stands to gain or lose, and the complexities in moving the negotiations forward on issues such as tariffs and investment, labour and environment. They also addressed a continuing issue - whether trade talks are better conducted at a regional or global level. A European perspective was provided by Wolf Grabendoff of the Institute for European Latin American Relations.

The keynote speaker, Thomas d'Aquino, President and Chief Executive of the Business Council on National Issues (BCNI), outlined the views of the Canadian business community on the FTAA. He indicated that the Canadian businesses represented by BCNI are committed to a successful FTAA negotiation, which they believe will bring benefits to all. Mr. d'Aquino indicated that economic integration must go hand in hand with other hemispheric integration priorities such as eradicating poverty and discrimination, promoting and strengthening democracy and respect for human rights, and improving the quality of education for the people of the hemisphere.

Many of the participants at the conference mentioned that they were worried about the strength and depth of commitment of two of the largest players in this negotiation, the United States and Brazil. The Clinton administration has been unable to obtain fast-track authority from Congress. Brazil appears too focussed on deepening its relations with MERCOSUR, the European Union and other bilateral relations as well as dealing with the global financial crisis, to be a driving force behind the FTAA. Firm leadership and a real commitment from the Brazilian and American policy-makers and business leaders to the FTAA negotiation process will be needed.

In the absence of sustained commitment from Brazil and the United States towards hemispheric economic integration, other countries such as Chile and Canada have taken up the challenge of providing leadership and trade policy development for the hemisphere. Other hemispheric issues have also come to the fore such as multilateral cooperation in education and the fight against drug trafficking. The participants at the conference also indicated that the FTAA negotiations will help countries with smaller economies to prepare for the Millennium Round negotiations of the World Trade Organization.

This conference was sponsored by the International Development Research Centre, the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development, the Canadian International Development Agency and the Embassy of Chile in Canada. A report of the conference will be available in 1999.

Canada and the FTAA: Strategic Considerations

Round-table discussions were held in Quebec City on December 11, 1998 on the subject of Canada and the Free Trade Area of the Americas: Strategic Considerations. The meeting was jointly organized by the Institut québécois des hautes études internationales of the Université Laval and FOCAL; it was sponsored by the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development.

Organized to complement broader public consultations held over the last year, these round-table discussions brought together academics and practitioners to share points of view and opinions on Canada's participation in the FTAA negotiation process. Discussions centered around a set of questions, including the scope of the FTAA, as envisaged by Canada; strategic consequences for Canada within the region; and how realistic the idea of

free trade can be at a time when a number of Latin American countries are in the throes of a financial crisis.

A policy team will draw on the views expressed during the round-table to prepare an overview of the actions Canada has taken regarding hemispheric free trade and the policy options available to the Canadian government in the on-going negotiation process. A summary document will be finalized in February 1999.

Information Meeting on Summit of the Americas

On October 15, 1998, FOCAL hosted a discussion for the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade between Canadian government officials and Canadian civil society representatives on the progress in implementing specific commitments made by the Heads of States at the Santiago Summit of the Americas in April 1998. The purpose of the meeting was to exchange information and views before the meeting of the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG). The SIRG, which includes government officials from 34 countries in the Western Hemisphere, was to review the progress in four areas of the Summit's Plan of Action: education, health, labour and the participation of civil society.

At FOCAL's meeting, Peter Boehm, Canada's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the Organization of American States (OAS), informed the participants about the creation of a troika comprising the United States, Canada, and Chile for coordinating the SIRG meetings. Mr. Boehm, who is also the National Summit Coordinator, spoke about the creation of the OAS Office for Summit Follow-up that will provide information on the implementation of the Santiago commitments. He indicated that Canada is calling for more openness and transparency in the implementation of hemispheric commitments. Canadian officials noted that the hemispheric initiatives were proceeding at an uneven rate, in accordance with each individual country's commitment to the various action items of the Santiago Summit's Plan of Action. This is particularly the case for the hemispheric civil society initiative. Canadian officials stated that they were open to suggestions for models of civil society consultations. Participants indicated that Canada has developed several useful models of government-civil society cooperation, especially in the health and education sectors. Another meeting of the SIRG will be held in early 1999.

The Situation in Chiapas

On September 11, 1998, FOCAL held a seminar on the situation in the State of Chiapas, Mexico. Participants were given information about the causes of the conflict between the Mexican Government and the Zapatistas, the main group seeking political reforms in the State of Chiapas, and about the proposed measures to establish long-term peace.

Approximately 60 participants from academia, government and civil society attended the seminar. The two-hour discussion featured six prominent speakers who have been involved in the situation in Chiapas since 1994. They were: Hector Romero and Armando Vivanco of the Embassy of Mexico in Canada, who outlined their government's position on the issue and the steps taken to resolve the conflict; Joe Gunn of the Inter-Church Committee for Human Rights in Latin America, who talked about the lobbying efforts of a Canadian group called The Mexico Working Group; Rafael Reygadas of the Civic Alliance, Mexico, who discussed the ongoing negotiations between the Zapatistas and the Mexican government,

and; officials at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade who discussed Canada's response to the situation in Chiapas. The seminar provided a unique opportunity for Mexican officials and a Mexican civil society representative to dialogue on this important issue. The event was sponsored by the Canadian International Development Agency.

The Privatization of Security in Latin America

On October 9, 1998, FOCAL organized a workshop to address an emerging area of concern for Latin America and the Caribbean: the increase in private security forces as a response to the growing public insecurity in the Americas resulting from a rise in violent street crimes, growing corruption within police forces and judicial systems, and the continued prevalence of drug-related crimes in neighbourhoods and cities.

The workshop was opened by Hal Klepak of the Royal Military College of Canada and an associate of FOCAL. Mr. Klepak anticipated that any analysis of the emergence of private security forces raises more questions than answers, such as:

- What are the long-term consequences of the State not living up to its responsibility for ensuring the safety of its citizens?
- What does it mean when the rich can access security and the poor cannot?
- Do States have a monopoly on the use of force?
- What are the consequences when poorly-trained citizens have access to weaponry to use against their co-citizens?
- How can arms trafficking be controlled when state authorities such as police do not have adequate weapons registry systems?
- Is there a relation between the rise in private security forces and the rise in paramilitary forces? What does this mean for the formal armed forces of the same State?
- What is the relation between the phenomenon of private security forces and drug-related crime in the region?

Mr. Klepak suggested that more thought needs to be given to these concerns since they can have a direct impact on Canada's commitment to the Americas. Canada has repeatedly articulated a need to belong to a peaceful, prosperous and democratic hemisphere. The privatization of security forces has a direct impact on these values and is fundamentally a threat to governance in the hemisphere. It is also relevant for foreign companies operating in the region which often employ private security forces.

Following this presentation, panelists from both Canada and various countries in the hemisphere including Mexico, Colombia, Honduras and the United States, addressed important issues such as the need for police reform, more institutional strengthening of judicial systems and the registration of firearms. The panelists also mentioned the continued need for multilateral responses such as the ratification of the OAS Convention Against Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related

Material.

The workshop, which was attended by about 50 people, was sponsored by the Canadian International Development Agency and the International Development Research Centre.

A New President and Direction for Venezuela

In an effort to anticipate significant political developments in the region, FOCAL launched a study of the December 1998 presidential elections in Venezuela. The country is about to become involved in a constitutional revision which is seen by most Venezuelans as necessary to overcome long-standing obstacles to development, such as widespread corruption and a judicial system that is not credible. Given the radical changes proposed by the new president-elect Hugo Chavez, feared by some for his authoritarian tendencies, Venezuela is entering uncharted waters after 40 years of governance by its two traditional parties, which have left the vast majority of the electorate disenchanted with the policies of the government. The clear majority for Chavez, who ran a populist campaign, indicates that Venezuelans will not be satisfied by a continuation of the status quo. However, Venezuelans have also placed checks and balances on the new president, who holds only a minority of seats in the new Congress, and does not have the support of the majority of the state governors of the country.

As part of its study, FOCAL monitored the regional and presidential elections in Venezuela this fall. Canada has significant commercial involvement with Venezuela - third only to Mexico and Brazil - in addition to investment interests in its natural resource (petroleum) sectors. On the eve of the presidential elections, FOCAL issued a backgrounder to encourage more coverage by the Canadian media. The backgrounder provided an assessment of the political, economic and social implications of the potential Chavez victory, particularly focusing on the economic and political stability in the region.

FOCAL will continue to monitor the situation in Venezuela, particularly statements by president Chavez on new directions in its foreign and economic policies. With financial assistance from the Canadian International Development Agency, FOCAL will convene a meeting of well-placed observers and commentators on Venezuela in early 1999. Participants will analyze the significance of the December 1998 elections and their impact on Venezuela's relations with the rest of the hemisphere, including Canada and the United States. Special importance will be given to prospects for economic and social development in Venezuela, where four out of five people live below the poverty line, and rural economic development is recognized as an urgent priority. Following this meeting, FOCAL will issue a policy paper that will provide perspectives on Venezuela's new foreign and economic policies, and new figures in its political landscape. The paper will propose options for new priorities in bilateral relations between Canada and Venezuela.

Discussion with President Alberto Fujimori of Peru

On October 28, 1998, FOCAL hosted a question and answer session between President Alberto Fujimori of Peru and representatives of Canadian government and non-government organizations including churches, unions, universities, human rights and international

development organizations. The event was chaired by Catherine Conaghan, Professor of Political Studies and Associate Director of the Centre for the Study of Democracy at Queen's University in Kingston, Canada.

This event, held in Ottawa, provided an opportunity for an exchange of opinions between the President of Peru and the participants on issues such as human rights, terrorism, Peruvian political and judicial institutions, and the recent signing of an agreement between Peru and Ecuador to end a long-standing border dispute. Many of the Canadian non-governmental participants at the meeting took the opportunity to express their views to the President about human rights concerns in Peru and the increasingly authoritarian course they consider he has taken since his election in 1990. Mr. Fujimori acknowledged that he had made some mistakes. He expressed that many of the measures he had implemented had been necessary to address the chaos caused by insurgents and drug traffickers in Peru. He added that, largely as a result of his successful crackdown on those groups, Peru is considered far more stable than in the past and that Peru's economy has grown significantly during much of the 1990s.

Professional Development Programs

FOCAL offers a few professional development programs designed to give a better understanding to Canadian youth and media about the issues affecting the Western Hemisphere.

Media Fellowships

Launched in 1994, FOCAL's Media Fellowship Program enables journalists, editors and producers to carry out a two-month program of independent research in a Latin American or a Caribbean country of their choice. The program is funded by the Canadian International Development Agency. Five Canadian journalists were awarded media fellowships by FOCAL in 1998:

- Deborah Bach, a reporter with Langley B.C.'s *Coquitlam Now*, will investigate the socio-economic impact of Canadian mining investments in Bolivia;
- Declan Hill, an associate producer with CBC Television in Toronto, will investigate the widespread Protestant conversions in rural Bolivia;
- Pierre Lacerte, a reporter with *L'Actualité*, will look at how small- and medium-sized Brazilian enterprises are dealing with the financial crisis in Asia;
- Emmanuel Marchand, a regional producer with CBC Newsworld in Montreal, will examine the effects of land privatization in Venezuela, with special emphasis on the forest reserve of Itacama;
- Richard Massicotte, a reporter with Société Radio-Canada in Montreal, will study the evolution of the Chilean judicial system since the transition to democracy.

MBA Internships

Through projects of interest to Canadian business such as market studies, the MBA Internship Program enables Canadian youth studying for a masters in business administration to gain valuable work experience in a Latin American or Caribbean country. FOCAL thanks the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and TransCanada Pipelines for

their support in 1998. Five students were posted in the fall of 1998 in the commercial section of Canadian missions in Latin America and the Caribbean:

- Alicja Bendkowska of Concordia University, Canadian Embassy in Lima, Peru;
- Daniel Eldridge of the University of Guelph, Canadian Embassy in Bogota, Colombia;
- Amber Houssian of the University of Calgary, Canadian Embassy in Mexico City; Mexico;
- Amanda Martinez of York University's Schulich School of Business, Canadian Consulate in Guadalajara, Mexico;
- Nicole Scott of York University's Schulich School of Business, Canadian Embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

FOCAL - OAS Internships

In the fall of 1998 FOCAL initiated an internship program, in cooperation with the Organization of American States, with the sponsorship of CIDA's International Youth Internship Program. From September to December, five young Canadians worked in the Executive Secretariat for Integral Development at the Inter-American Council for Integral Development and Technical Co-operation in Washington. This program provided an opportunity for the interns to become familiar with how an international organization works, along with developing important contacts for the future.

Regional Activities

FOCAL has three regional offices through which it can better reach interested groups, invite their collaboration and disseminate information.

Among the recent activities of the regional offices, FOCAL-Atlantic, headquartered at the University of New Brunswick, held a round table on electronic commerce for the Caribbean region and hosted a Cuban delegation visiting Atlantic Canada. FOCAL-Quebec, headquartered at Laval University, co-organized a round table on democracy in Latin America and designed a web site with links to Latin American sites. FOCAL-West, headquartered at the University of Calgary, organized lunch-hour discussions on topics ranging from human rights in Colombia to the impact of the Asian financial crisis in Latin America.

Upcoming Events

FOCAL will address its policy priorities through the following activities in the Spring of 1999:

- a meeting on the future development of Central America in Washington, organized by the Inter-American Dialogue, in cooperation with FOCAL;
- a meeting of experts on the future of Canada-Venezuela relations;
- a round table on Brazil-Canada relations;
- the annual meeting of Canada's ambassadors to the region in Calgary, in cooperation with FOCAL-West;
- an experts' meeting in Costa Rica on the links between drugs and human security in

the Americas;

FOCAL is collaborating with the Canadian Association of Latin American and Caribbean Studies' (CALACS) and Carleton University (School of International Affairs, Economics Department, Carleton International) to organize a conference on *Latin America and the Caribbean into the Coming Millennium: Equity, Democracy and Sustainability*. The conference will analyze the development experience of Latin America and the Caribbean during the decade of the 1990s and assess the central problems, policies and prospects for the region as we enter the next millennium.

Date of conference: October 1-3, 1999
Location: Carleton University, Ottawa

Publications

New:

Confidence Building Sidestepped: The Peru-Ecuador Conflict of 1995

This new 165-page book by Hal Klepak provides readers with a better understanding of the concept of confidence building measures and explores the application of the confidence building process in solving the Peru-Ecuador conflict of 1995. (In English only) \$20.00

Soon to be published:

FOCAL paper on Canada-Mexico Relations

Upcoming conference reports on:

Cuba Today and Issues for Canadian Policy

Governance in the Andes

¿Una Gran Familia?: Hemispheric Integration After the Santiago Summit

Educational Reforms in the Americas