

I expressed at the outset my view of the importance of creating an active, informed, and dispassionate Canadian public opinion, whose interest and judgment might encourage compliance with the peace plan. I think it appropriate that the House of Commons pursue more formally the interest several individual Members have already shown in the region and the process. At the Government's request House Leaders have begun discussions on the appropriate parliamentary committee to allow this House to monitor and encourage the peace process in Central America. I would place before that Committee, on a monthly basis, a report on the current compliance with the plan, and would seek to arrange other briefings and background. It might be useful for the Committee to receive the discussion paper on peacekeeping which was the basis of our conversations last week, and to examine other ways by which Canada can constitute constructively to achieving peace. Officials of External Affairs, CIDA, and other departments would be available to provide information.

Those of us who criticize the superpowers' involvement in Central America often unconsciously commit the error we condemn, and see the region not by its own lights, but in the shadow of a superpower. The initiative of the five presidents is more than an attempt to resolve their own problems. It is an assertion of their distinct destiny. These are five countries with histories, aspirations, identities of their own. Their development has been blunted by repression and poverty and conflict. Trade and tourists shift away from a region known as a "war zone". Economic strategies are displaced by military strategies. Children, who should be in families, are orphaned; youngsters, who should be in school, are at war.

The real issue is not Marxism, nor death squads, nor even the abuse of human rights. Those are symptoms. The root problems are economic and social, and Central America needs peace to resolve them. Five different presidents - with courage and uncommon unanimity - have launched their own initiative for peace. The issue now is whether the five presidents who signed the Accord will respect its principles, and keep moving towards peace, and towards "the climate of liberty that democracy ensures." I believe this House would agree that Canada should encourage and help them.