

El Salvador

Instead, I think we have to see our position for what it is, and it surely somehow relates to what Canada will bring to the debate and what its attitude will be.

I think the attitude of Canada has to be that which is in our tradition. I think, instead of coming down on one side or the other of that east-west conflict, we should take the attitude that is being fostered in our parliamentary committees where in fact, knowledge and caring is being found. We have had a committee sitting hour after hour after on North-South dialogue. We need to redirect our effort from confrontation to peace and compassion and the reality of longer-term programs that will bring peace and stability to that region. We need to start caring about human rights, and we need to express concerns about human rights in El Salvador. I commend and support those hon. members who have said that. We need to express concern about human rights in Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Ethiopia, Somalia, wherever there is this east-west conflict the results of which we must share.

Now, it is very easy to say that Canada perhaps does not have an interest in the area or that we somehow do not really have an involvement there through our traditions or our practice. We might not have that involvement now but perhaps we should have it and anyway, whether we like it or not, if the east-west confrontation continues, we will be involved.

Hopefully, our involvement will not be a military one but rather that of a country with compassion and freedom. In trying to pick up the results, regardless on which side, the east, the west the right or the left, we will pick up the tragedy that will result from war in that region.

We know only too well in this House that there are no winners in any war. No war is ever won. The people involved directly suffer the most, anyone involved suffers in any kind of war. There will be, in fact there are already, losers in this war. I understand we are already starting to see the fallout of some 60,000 refugees and, again, it does not matter who wins, there will be refugees from the right wing, there will be refugees from the left wing. The refugees of the world are created by this east-west conflict. And who in the world will then be called upon to accept the refugees, to help them? The United Nations will be called upon to do so and so will Canada but, before these people become refugees, we must consider peaceful participation in the affairs of El Salvador, of South America and of the North-South community of nations. That is where the matter stands, and that is where we should be looking now.

Instead of condemning one side or the other, why not propose perhaps an international monitoring system that will supervise both economic and social support programs? Why not bring in this type of a program instead of political and military solutions one way or the other? We do not have involvement in the area. In fact, we know the need is there. It is clearly identified in almost any sphere by any group, it does not matter whether it is left, right or centre. The need for stability is demonstrated there, stability that can provide the infrastructure to deliver aid programs and, beyond the aid programs, an infrastructure that can deliver development pro-

grams. I wish that were the tone of the United States, of the Soviet Union and of Canada. This debate, in my opinion, Mr. Speaker, has not provided that tone because the very nature of the motion is that of confrontation.

I am concerned about the disparities which I hear about, the stories that the area is wracked with terrorism, violence, oppression, torture and murder. Ten thousand people were murdered there last year alone, many thousands more were left homeless by the fighting. Yet, I am encouraged that in the midst of this, reform is also taking place. It is time for us to participate in making reform a reality and to move toward development and stability in the region. Whether it be a communist, a fascist or a democratic system, people prosper from strong and stable economic, social and political structures which deliver services.

Let us not look to confrontation with the President of the United States; let us look to supporting the President and encouraging a redirection in aid programs to that area. We should work toward an international monitoring of the military and political situation, and above all, we should supervise the distribution and control of arms.

In conclusion, I wish that Parliament, with its reputation for peace and humanitarianism, would come to the aid of El Salvador rather than joining with or condemning one side or the other.

● (2150)

[Translation]

Mr. Louis Duclos (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, having read very quickly the motion moved by the New Democratic Party, I feel the very least that can be said is that it gives an incomplete description of the situation in El Salvador. I also believe that this motion is rather naive as it does not take into account the various implications and ramifications of the situation prevailing in that country, while on the other hand, the motion seems to me slightly pretentious as it purports to be based on a thorough knowledge of the factual reality in that unfortunate country.

Mr. Speaker, no one questions the fact that in Central America as in the Latin American continent as a whole, socioeconomic conditions are so horrendous that they literally make visitors to these countries sick to their stomachs. I had the opportunity to live for two years in South America and I can understand the feelings of exasperation and frustration of a working class exploited by oligarchies with the support of governments which to say the least tolerate those inequities. Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, these problems must be solved by the people of those countries. In the case of El Salvador, the last thing to wish for would be a massive presence or intervention by any foreign interest.

Mr. Speaker, the motion gives the impression that we are living in a world where there are only good guys and bad guys, where everything is either black or white. In other words,