

COMMENTARY

CANADA-CENTRAL AMERICA

RELATIONS WITH NICARAGUA

As It Happens Oct. 26/84

(Interview with John Foster, Chairman of the Inter-Church Committee on Human Rights in Latin America)

Mr. Foster said countries went more readily to observe elections in El Salvador because they were encouraged to do so. He said the U.S. is trying to ignore or undermine the Nicaraguan election and that Canada's decision not to send observers is based on American opinion of the situation in Nicaragua.

CBC Radio As It Happens Oct. 29/84

(Interview with Human Rights Commissioner Gordon Fairweather)

Mr. Fairweather said that Canada has made the wrong decision in not sending observers to the Nicaraguan election and was influenced by the U.S. He said the action will cause the Canadian public to draw the wrong conclusions about Nicaragua and that the credibility of the election would have been helped had Canada been present.

CBC Radio Sunday Morning Oct. 28/84

(Commentary by John Kirk, associate professor of Latin American studies at Dalhousie University)

Mr. Kirk said that many specialists feel Canada made a "dreadful" mistake in not sending observers and this policy reveals a double standard towards Central America. He said research by Canadian church representatives showed that conditions in Nicaragua were much more conducive to an election than they had been in El Salvador, contrary to Canadian government reports. He called the Canadian policy irrational and unbalanced and too tied to American policy, likening Canada to a state rather than a country.

CBC Radio As It Happens Nov. 30/84

(Interview with Richard Gwyn and Francis Russell (political columnist for the Winnipeg Free Press))

Speculation over whether Canada will open an embassy in Nicaragua and whether Clark leaked the memo on purpose. Francis Russell said he thought Clark leaked the memo and that opening an embassy in Nicaragua would be a good way of showing that the government will not go along with all American policies. Richard Gwyn agreed.

CBC Radio As It Happens Nov. 28/84

(Interview with Tim Draimin, Central American specialist with the Jesuit Centre in Toronto)

Mr. Draimin says the tapes confirm that the PC government is interested in opening an embassy in Nicaragua and that Clark's comments, on the whole, reflect positively on his work--he is shown to be interested in political issues and open to exploring the possibility of Canada pursuing an independent foreign policy. A reporter asked why Mr. Clark was not better briefed on the electoral process in Nicaragua. Mr. Draimin speculated that "nobody in External Affairs thought it was a significant enough point to raise with (him)" and said he would have been better briefed if Canada did have an embassy in Nicaragua.