

Oral Question

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As the theme from New Brunswick's community colleges states, they are reflective of our province and responsive to our people. Whether you need the skills to enter the new job market or the upgrading to improve your present position, they have the training that works. I feel certain that those words speak for all community colleges and technical schools right across Canada.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

EL SALVADOR

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. This morning I spoke to Miss Karen Ridd, the young Canadian aid worker who has just returned from El Salvador and who also happens to be a constituent of mine. She spoke of the very deep and urgent need for this country to press for a negotiated settlement in that strife-ridden country, and particularly for the protection of human rights. The Catholic bishops who appeared before the external affairs committee yesterday said exactly the same thing, that it is time for Canada to take advantage of its new position in the OAS and to take action in this area.

Can the Deputy Prime Minister tell us if the Government of Canada has expressed its deep desire for the government of El Salvador to begin negotiating a settlement in that country? Have we expressed our concern to the United States government, suggesting that it stop providing military aid to the government of El Salvador during this strife? In other words, what action is the Government of Canada taking to try to bring an end to that horrible situation in El Salvador?

[Translation]

Hon. Monique Landry (Minister for External Relations): Mr. Speaker, I can inform the hon. member that, with all the members of this House, we deplore what is happening today in El Salvador. Of course we are trying every possible means to make this terrible situation come to an end and provide some relief for the population. At the OAS meeting in Washington yesterday, we discussed

the situation with the entire team, and I can inform the hon. member that talks have now ended but will resume Monday, and of course we hope that as a result of all these negotiations, the situation will come to an end and peace will return to El Salvador.

[English]

Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the minister who has just spoken. Yesterday when the Catholic bishops appeared before the committee, they expressed a very important concern that there be a form of independent inquiry and independent protection for human rights in El Salvador. They had just returned from the funeral of the six slain Jesuit priests and said that the threat, the danger and the menace that exists in that country is repressive.

Has Canada taken advantage of its new position in the OAS to ask that organization to undertake an independent inquiry into the deaths of those priests? Have we or will we use our position on the Security Council to ask for an international presence in that country to protect all those people whose human rights are presently being threatened or being menaced? In other words, is Canada taking specific initiatives to try to provide for the protection of the lives of the people of El Salvador?

[Translation]

Mrs. Landry: Mr. Speaker, I am of course aware of the fact that three priests appeared yesterday before the Standing Committee on External Affairs, where they too expressed their concern about the situation.

The hon. member knows very well that the government wishes to see a negotiated peace in El Salvador, and we have indicated our position through the OAS. We shall continue to urge all parties, all governments to cease their intervention in El Salvador, and we continue to hope that the parties will be able to sit down and negotiate a lasting peace, which is the only way to bring back peace to this country and eventually ensure the development and well-being of the people of El Salvador.

• (1120)

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Speaker, as the Minister knows, Canada can act alone right now with regard to El Salvador. For example, we can have an open-door policy for refugees. We can make our aid conditional on respect