

Canada's commercial and immigration interests in Nicaragua are in fact quite limited, and they appear to be looked after adequately under current arrangements. Unless there is a marked increase in trade, aid, immigration or other ties, an embassy should not be a priority. Accordingly, a majority of the committee opposes the proposal for immediate establishment of a Canadian embassy in Managua but urges the government to monitor the opportunities that might arise.

Finally we come to *Costa Rica*, the southern-most of the Central American republics, which continues its tradition of general respect for human rights. There have been worrying signs that Costa Rica was progressively being drawn into regional conflict and would itself fall victim to polarization and violence. We are encouraged, however, that the new government of President Oscar Arias has taken several positive steps to arrest this trend and to strengthen Costa Rica's role as a peace maker in Central America. In particular, the conclusion of a border agreement with Nicaragua is evidence that concrete progress can be made in resolving regional conflicts. Canada should continue to provide generous assistance to Costa Rica and strongly support Costa Rica's efforts as a regional peace maker.

In the course of presenting this brief review of Central America, we have demonstrated repeatedly our conviction that the promotion of human rights in the region depends critically on political and economic reform within the countries, peace between them, and an end to superpower—and particularly U.S.—intervention in the region. Above all, Central America needs breathing room to find its own solutions to its own problems. We are encouraged that the governments of the region are beginning to assert their independence and to expend effort in the search for peace.

Many Canadians believe that Canada can and should be very active in Central America. In addition to supporting the Contadora process and dialogue within and between individual countries, Canada should promote human rights in Central America by maintaining a generous refugee policy for those who are the victims of human rights violations. Some 8,300 Central American refugees came to Canada in 1984 and 1985 alone. While Canadian influence over the security policies of other countries is limited, Canada has a special opportunity to offer direct, practical and desperately needed help to the hundreds of thousands of refugees in the region. We would urge two Canadian initiatives: establishment of a 'Refugee Watch' program with other countries and non-governmental organizations to provide greater security in the refugee camps; and active support for economic development and self-sufficiency programs for refugees. The government should also strengthen Canada's capacity to monitor human rights situations in Central America, paying particular attention to the circumstances in each country and the views of Canadian NGOs in these countries. Canada should promote co-operative programs of democratic and human rights development and support elements in these countries favouring progress in human rights.