

*Statements by Ministers*

Just today we tabled in this House a report of the Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade which abhorred the threat which has been made on the family of a Canadian aid worker in El Salvador, Karen Ridd from Winnipeg. Just today we tabled that report which abhorred not just the threat but the reality of assassinations, murders, bombings and everything else that goes on in El Salvador and yet the Americans do not seem moved by this. They say this is all part of the struggle for democracy, to speak of democracy in a way that I cannot fully comprehend.

• (1850)

Our point here, which I think is shared by a great many Canadians, is that there is an overwhelming sense of hypocrisy that sweeps over us when we listen to the American justifications for these actions. This is not to diminish the life of the American serviceman who was killed, or the value of his family or anyone else's family. People are being killed in Central America all the time, but they are not Americans. Even when they are Americans, they do not seem to count.

I recall the murder of the four nuns in El Salvador. This did not provoke an invasion by the United States. I am not saying it should have. I am just saying that there is a selectivity in the outrage that Washington displays from time to time with respect to human rights violations that is hard for us to swallow and hard for a great many Canadians to swallow. I think the Secretary of State for External Affairs would be well advised to show that he shares some of that skepticism. I do not know why he cannot do that.

The minister mentioned Nicaragua, and I am glad that he did. In committee a couple of weeks ago we asked him questions about Nicaragua. We asked questions about why the Canadian government had not spoken out against American funding of the opposition in Nicaragua. Certainly we would find it offensive if we knew, or if we could prove, that American money was being funnelled in to support opposition, or government, or anyone else for that matter, in a Canadian political election. Yet this is the kind of thing that the minister is not prepared to criticize and condemn.

We line that up alongside the government's unwillingness to show the same kind of courage that Canadians

like Karen Ridd have shown in El Salvador by putting its political and diplomatic weight between the United States and the people of El Salvador. We get the sense that the government is reluctant to speak the truth about what is going on in Central America. It is not because we are anti-American. I know the minister likes to say this, but it is because we share the views of a great many other Americans about the role of their government in Central America.

Perhaps the minister wants to maintain that a great many of the churches in the United States are anti-American, that a great many other non-governmental organizations, trade unions, members of the House of Representatives who have criticized American policy in Central America are also anti-American, that the minister knows more about being American than they do.

It is a very simplistic, childish and offensive claim that people who make these criticisms of the United States are anti-American. We are not. As Canadians we are friends of the Americans and as the country of Canada and we have a responsibility as their friends to tell them the truth about themselves and what they are doing in the world. That is what friends are for. You expect that it will be your friend who tells you the morning after the night before that you acted like an idiot at the party, or that you were rude to someone, or that you should improve your behaviour with respect to this or that element of your personality. That is our obligation to the United States. It is not our obligation to keep letting them think that they are doing okay when we know full well that they are not. That is the definition, at least in my judgment, and I think in the judgment of a great many other people who know something about friendship. That is what friends are really for and that is the role that we ought to be playing with the United States.

The minister mentioned the Organization of American States. I think in a way he was saying that it was the failure of the Organization of American States to arrive at a negotiated settlement which set the context for the Americans having to do what they did.

There may be a grain of truth in that. The grain of truth is, of course, if the OAS had succeeded in reaching a negotiated settlement, then there would not have been the context in which the Americans could have decided to do this.