

Oral Questions

Mr. Allmand: You should have an agenda.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Is it the position of the Liberal party that we should not be in the OAS? I would appreciate some clarification.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Know what you are doing before you do it.

An Hon. Member: Where is Paul Martin when we need him.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): I know the Liberal party on several earlier occasions has preached a kind of isolationism. They made it clear that we should not play a leading role in the hemisphere. We believe that Canada should play that kind of leading role and I would be interested in knowing the position of the Liberal party.

We did not wait to join the OAS to make representations to Latin American governments regarding the question of human rights. We make those representations regularly and effectively. We will continue to do that. If anything, our membership in the OAS will increase our capacity to make those representations for respect for human rights far more effectively.

Indeed, if the hon. member would read the speech that was given to the meeting in Costa Rica on Friday, he would notice that among the themes upon which the Prime Minister laid emphasis was precisely the question of human rights and the essential relation between human rights and democracy, both of which we encourage by our active presence in Latin America. I am sorry to see that the Liberal party wants to draw back from our obligations in this hemisphere.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Christine Stewart (Northumberland): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Prime Minister. Perhaps I can clarify to the Secretary of State what our policy is. The Liberal statement released on OAS membership stated that membership in the OAS cannot be used as a proxy for substantive policy for Latin America.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Stewart: Policy should not be developed without consultation. The Secretary of State, if I heard right, said he had suggestions from the U.S. and Ortega about our relationship in Latin America. Why did this government in this parliamentary session not consult with Parlia-

ment's own Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade and Canadian non-government organizations before grandstanding an empty policy in Costa Rica? Will the Prime Minister now appear before the committee to justify his move?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, that of course is an old question that was raised two or three weeks ago and answered two or three weeks ago.

I understand that there will be an invitation extended to me to come before the standing committee and I look forward to doing that as I have regularly throughout my time as Secretary of State for External Affairs appeared before standing committees to discuss public policy with the members of that committee.

There is an obligation upon national governments to make decisions, to take actions in the national interest. We believe that it is time to contribute, to add more force to an already effective Canadian policy respecting Latin America by joining the organization that draws together the countries of that region and provides a political forum.

The OAS is far from being a perfect organization. We believe that Canada's role in that organization can help strengthen it as the role of Canada in the last four years has markedly strengthened the Commonwealth and as the role of Canada in the last four years has not only strengthened but has allowed the creation of la francophonie.

There may be some in this House who think that we should be drawing away from international organizations. We believe that there is a particular Canadian capacity to strengthen those organizations, and we think it is appropriate for us to apply those Canadian talents in Latin American in our own neighbourhood.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Len Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Prime Minister said that he would be very open to suggestions as to how to cut the deficit. I have a suggestion today for the Prime Minister.