

Adjournment Debate

Mr. Doug Frith (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, in reply to the hon. member for Algoma (Mr. Foster), I am glad he began his remarks with some of the recommendations of the Hall report.

On March 20, the minister indicated to the House that she agreed with the position taken by Mr. Hall in his report in which he said that extra billing was totally unacceptable. Extra billing is unacceptable to the minister. Justice Emmett Hall reported that there must be a reasonable compensation mechanism for payment to physicians. The minister also supports that viewpoint of Mr. Hall.

The minister would like to point out to the hon. member that when the renegotiations take place in 1982 for extra program funding, one recommendation she will make to her cabinet colleagues will be to take steps or conditionalities to ban extra billing, as well as to recommend that some mechanism be found to properly compensate physicians.

The minister would also like to point out that when the new Ontario government was elected on March 19, she was hopeful that through negotiations we would be able to attain some way in which to ban extra billings but at the same time find a mechanism to properly compensate physicians. The minister also agrees with the recommendation of the Hall report that if we were to take unilateral action on the banning of funds to provinces to stop extra billing, it would simply result in the disruption of services. In September 1980, she promised provincial ministers that we would tend to do it by consensus. We plan to meet with provincial ministers of health sometime over the next two or three months. Hopefully by consensus we will reach a method by which to ban extra billing but at the same time to find some mechanism which properly compensates physicians.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS—DISCUSSIONS WITH UNITED STATES
SECRETARY OF STATE

Mr. Bob Ogle (Saskatoon East): Mr. Speaker, I first directed my question to the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacGuigan) on February 3. It related to his visit with General Haig which took place just a few days previous. Also it related to the credibility of such a meeting and how they discussed the North-South question at that time.

Since that time, two months have passed and many events have taken place in relation to the situation in El Salvador and to the development of the north-south question. In that time, too, we found out much more about the credibility of certain matters which had been used as a basis for making judgments, but which put Canada into an unfavourable light, not only within Canada, but also within many other countries in the world, in our relationship to central America and, in particular, El Salvador.

● (2215)

Last Monday, when we watched in horror as President Reagan was shot down in Washington, I was struck by another factor of the whole story which was unveiling itself at that

time. It was the inaccuracy of the news we were receiving about what was taking place with the president. This was an event being witnessed right there with television and radio people and commentators. Yet during the course of those first three or four hours we were told the President of the United States had not been hit, that the President of the United States was fine, and that the President of the United States was joking when he went into the hospital. We then found out that the President was hit, and then that the President was hit severely and was in a dangerous situation. At the same time, from the same news sources, we were finding out that James Brady, the press secretary, had been hit seriously, that he had died, then that he had not died, that he was getting better, and then that he was going to recover.

The reason I make this point—and that was a very recent experience with so many people in this country who watched that happening—is that right there, in that very limited space, they had difficulty finding out what was going on. These people who were involved very closely in that whole incident, as the power structure changed in Washington, and everything else occurring after the incident, could be the people who might cause our next atomic war. That kind of inability to be on top of the truth of the situation really made me afraid.

Canada's jumping-in almost immediately in El Salvador in order to follow the pattern of the United States in that country or at least give it a kind of moral dimension that it was not wrong, is based on what I feel has been very inaccurate information. Our government must be very careful about checking out its information as a situation like this proceeds, particularly if we are to have any credibility whatsoever in the North-South matter. The North-South matter, which I believe our country and our government wants to enter into seriously has a great deal to do with credibility. Are we really serious about the poor of the world, or are we just sufficiently serious that we will follow what the United States decides to do in a particular part of the world on a policy which may be founded on very poor information?

A publication printed in Toronto, gives good information about Latin America in general. It is called "Central America Update", and it is published jointly by the Latin American Working Group and the Jesuit Centre for Social Faith and Justice. They followed this El Salvador question and reported that:

In late February, the U.S. State Department released a special "white paper" titled "Communist Interference in El Salvador". This white paper is the first major foreign policy statement by the Reagan administration, and reflects its determination to "draw the line" against "international communism" in Central America.

While President Reagan proclaims that El Salvador will not be another Vietnam, this white paper paints a picture of the world that is almost identical to the one that lead us into the Vietnam War. The white paper itself is similar to another white paper put out by the State Department over a decade and a half ago to justify U.S. intervention in the Vietnam conflict. In 1965, the State Department released "Aggression from the North: the Record of North Vietnam's Campaign to Conquer South Vietnam". This document on Vietnam, like the Salvadorean white paper, blamed the war raging in the south on external forces and was used to argue for a massive buildup of U.S. forces in South Vietnam.