

visit rather than prejudging the situation and making that decision last week?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, there are two reasons. First, it is our view that there has been an improvement in the human rights situation there, not the improvement we would like to see but an improvement nonetheless. Second, I think the Hon. Member will agree with me, and has agreed in the past, as his Party has with the analysis of the Government of Canada that the fundamental problems in Central America are problems of poverty and inequality. They are not problems of ideology.

If the fundamental problems are problems of poverty and economic development, then it makes sense for countries like Canada to follow aid and development programs which will lead to the resolution of those basic problems. It is a demonstration of Canada acting as we speak, which is something we on this side of the House try to do.

MINISTER'S IMPENDING VISIT TO CENTRAL AMERICA

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Birds Hill): Mr. Speaker, I hope the Minister would also agree that questions of poverty and inequality cannot be separated in many cases from the quality of the regimes which are in place in these various countries, and from the responsibility of countries like Canada to put pressure on such Governments. So I repeat the question, to a degree, and further ask the Minister whether or not he intends upon his return to make a statement in Parliament so that we might have an opportunity to hear his views and to respond to whatever the Minister has decided as a result of his visit to Central America?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member will know that it has been my practice quite regularly to make statements to the House. In fact my predecessors in the Liberal Government, to my knowledge, in four years made no statements to Parliament on foreign policy. I have made several because it is the belief of this Government that it is important to try to involve the whole of Parliament and, indeed, the whole of the country in foreign policy matters. So I will report either directly to the House or to the standing committee.

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CANADA POST CORPORATION

CLOSURE OF RURAL POST OFFICES—PROVISION OF ALTERNATE SERVICES

Mr. Bob Corbett (Fundy—Royal): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister responsible for Canada Post. Across the country there have recently been a number of rural post office closures. In some cases, such as Bloomfield Station in my constituency and Head of St. Margarets Bay in

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Halifax West, Canada Post has closed the post office without providing alternate retail service to the community.

In view of the unfairness of this policy, would the Minister consider meeting with Canada Post officials in an effort to restructure the rural services policy to prevent closures from occurring before alternate retail service outlets are found?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, as the Hon. Member is, I am sure, aware, the policy Canada Post has been following has been that when there is a retirement, resignation or some other event, where a postmaster or postmistress is leaving their post, it examines whether it is appropriate to continue the same kind of service which existed before. If not, because of changing demographics and so on, it would seek to make changes. It is supposed to do that with full consultation with the community, Members of Parliament and so on. However, I hear the Hon. Member's representation and I will certainly take it to the Crown corporation.

Mr. Speaker: I want to say to the Hon. Member for Regina West that I have his notice of a point of order or a question of privilege and I will hear him shortly. However, I have some matters I have to take up with the House before that.

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PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED UNPARLIAMENTARY CONDUCT—MR. SPEAKER'S RULING

Mr. Speaker: I want to deal now with a matter that arose on Thursday, October 29, which is of some importance to the House. On that day the Hon. Member for Yorkton—Melville (Mr. Nystrom) and the Hon. Member for Saint-Jacques (Mr. Guilbault) asked the Chair to review the statement of the Right Hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) made during Question Period on Wednesday, October 28. I refer to *Hansard* at page 10482. The Right Hon. Prime Minister in response to a question said the following:

I know that my hon. friends in the Liberal and New Democratic Parties are opposed to the interests of western Canada. That becomes clearer every day.

That is the exact quote of the latter part of the answer of the right hon. gentleman.

During the procedural debate, the Chair was asked to carefully review that statement in the context of citation 316 of *Beauchesnes' Fifth Edition* which states that it is not proper to "impute bad motives or motives different from those acknowledged to a Member".

I have also had the opportunity to review our practice and precedents as well as the whole of the discussion that took place on that difficult afternoon of Thursday, October 29, 1987.