

In terms of bilateral intervention, officials of the Department of External Affairs have expressed to Salvadoran officials in Ottawa on many occasions Canada's concerns about the governing junta's response to violence from both the left and the right. In terms of multilateral intervention, Canada's ambassador and permanent observer to the Organization of American States actively expressed Canada's views at the OAS Tenth Geneva Assembly in November 1980. Then on March 11, 1981, at the 37th Session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Canada voted for a resolution calling for the appointment of a special representative to investigate reports of human rights violations in El Salvador.

On the topic of refugee help, Canada has an annual refugee plan which includes close co-ordination and co-operation with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, the UNHCR. At present the UNHCR policy is directed toward local resettlement in the region with eventual repatriation when conditions permit. The UNHCR is advising all countries that special refugee settlement programs are not needed. This position accords with the current Canadian perception.

However, the Canadian government will consider individual requests for assistance to resettle refugees for whom local resettlement in countries of first asylum is impossible. The government's program for 1981 makes provision for their acceptance into Canada—and here I would remind honourable senators that the UNHCR plan is for local settlement—with a view to eventual repatriation when conditions permit. But notably and as I mentioned earlier, the Canadian government will consider individual requests for assistance.

The program for 1981 makes provision for the acceptance into Canada of up to 1,000 refugees from all of Central and Latin America. In addition, special measures to assist persons affected by the strife in El Salvador were announced on March 19, 1981 in the House of Commons by the Minister of Employment and Immigration, the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy. With regard to direct assistance, in an effort to assist Salvadorans affected by the conflict, Canada announced in February 1981 a contribution of \$250,000 to the International Committee of the Red Cross in favour of El Salvador. In the fiscal year 1980-81 the Canadian International Development Agency provided \$127,250 to Canadian non-governmental organizations managing projects in El Salvador.

Again, as I mentioned, Senator Macquarrie stated that we must have concern for the people of El Salvador, and that our first concern should be for them. He also called our attention to the hazards of third party intervention in El Salvador and questioned the role of the Canadian government vis-à-vis the United States and its involvement there.

I want to emphasize that, as I understand the government's position, Canada strongly supports the traditional principles of international law in opposition to any interference from the outside in another country's domestic affairs. The United States is aware of this position. In addition, Canada has a long standing policy of not providing arms to areas of tension and deplores the fact that competing forces in El Salvador are receiving supplies from outside sources. Canada's position on

the supply of arms to El Salvador has been clear and consistent. It has been explained to the United States and it remains unchanged.

Honourable senators, I now direct some remarks to the resolution of the conflict. As I signalled earlier, I agree with Senator Macquarrie, that a political solution must be sought. We reject the concept of a military solution to the problems in El Salvador and support the action of the national government in urging all governments, including those communist nations, to refrain from supplying offensive weapons to the parties involved.

We welcome the decision of the Government of El Salvador to call elections for March 1982 for a constituent assembly, and its willingness to begin a dialogue with the revolutionary left on both the election process and the monitoring of it. All political parties have been invited to register for the elections, including leftist parties willing to lay down their arms. We support this commitment on the part of the Government of El Salvador to abide by the will of the Salvadoran people as expressed in elections and, equally, to reject the attempt of the revolutionary forces to negotiate the formation of a non-elected coalition government and condemn their unwillingness to submit their claim to representing the Salvadoran people to the test of democratically conducted elections. Despite the civil unrest in El Salvador, it is our conviction—and my conviction—that elections could be held in 1982 in a fair manner. Elections have been conducted on other occasions, in other parts of the world, under equally difficult, if not more difficult, circumstances.

● (1500)

As indicated by the Secretary of State for External Affairs in his statement of June 16, 1981, President Duarte is on public record as saying that the OAS would be welcome to monitor elections in El Salvador. I understand there would be support within the OAS for taking on this responsibility, should the major parties to the dispute so desire.

Again, along with Senator Macquarrie, I praise the leadership provided by the church in El Salvador during these difficult times, and note that the Acting Archbishop, Monsignor Rivera Y Damas, has, himself, commented favourably on the willingness of the Government of El Salvador to find a political solution to the problem.

I turn now to another dimension that has arisen in this debate, and that is Canada's role in the promotion of a political settlement in El Salvador. I draw the attention of honourable senators to the comparatively limited links which Canada has with El Salvador in terms of historic, linguistic, cultural and commercial ties. Canada is already in the process of becoming much more deeply involved in assisting the peoples and governments of the Commonwealth Caribbean in dealing with their own overwhelming economic and social difficulties. I use the word "comparatively" because I am comparing our links with El Salvador to the depths of the links, in terms of historic, linguistic, cultural and business ties, we have with the Commonwealth Caribbean nations. Because of an absence of such deep roots in El Salvador, we do not