

Statements by Ministers

The Secretary of State quotes President Bush as having said that the United States had to ensure the safety of the Americans in Panama. That is not grounds for us to justify or condemn the action. Were there other ways of ensuring the safety of the Americans other than by invasion?

Again I quote the former Prime Minister of Canada from *Hansard* of October 25, 1983, when he says:

I do not know why invasion was necessary. The Leader of the Opposition goes on to quote President Reagan as saying that the invasion was also intended to maintain the democratic system. The Leader of the Opposition said that should suffice for me. Obviously it is sufficient for him. I would ask him what would happen if the United States gave itself authority to invade any country where the democratic system did not exist?

The Secretary of State said that the Latin American countries are no one's back yard. Congratulations for making that statement in this House.

I would like to ask the Secretary of State, considering that Nicaragua now has its troops on full alert, what will his response be if tomorrow morning the United States decides to move into Nicaragua's back yard?

Unless the United States provides information which will demonstrate that this invasion was necessary to protect the safety of American nationals and unless there was no other means of doing it, then the intervention would seem unjustified. Let us remember that prior to the invasion, the United States had 12,000 troops in Panama. Could 12,000 troops not protect themselves and other American nationals?

I go back to the comments I made earlier in this House today and I call upon the government to use our membership in the Security Council, use our membership in the OAS to categorically state to our American friends that we cannot and will not support any violation of the principle of non-invasion, as the Secretary of State himself said, so that this incident is not precedent-setting.

• (1840)

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona): Mr. Speaker, earlier in the day when I thought that the Secretary of State for External Affairs might not be making a statement in the House, we filed for an emergency debate. It was on the basis of an understanding reached between the parties that the minister would be able to make the

statement he just made that we withdrew that request for an emergency debate.

I am glad that we had an opportunity to push the House toward an occasion like this one in which the minister was able to give the government's view and we are able to say what we have to say about the situation in Panama.

I would like to begin by referring to the language of precedent. This could be a dangerous precedent. The problem, as we see it from our side of the House, is not that this is a precedent—never mind a dangerous precedent—but that it is more of a continuation of a way of relating to Latin America that the United States has had since the establishment of the Munro doctrine in 1823. Since then there have been many precedents, almost all of them dangerous, of American action in Central and Latin America. It is to this American tradition of intervention in Central America that we feel compelled to address ourselves in this situation.

Despite its arguable uniqueness, it has a lot in common with many other American actions in that area of the world. Of course every situation has its uniqueness, but there is a thread which runs through all of them, that is the persistent view held in Washington that when push comes to shove, when the United States cannot get its way and if it feels that it can be militarily successful, this is an option which it reserves to itself and which it expects its allies if not to approve of at least not to condemn.

Over the years it has been a problem, it seems to me, for Canada and for many other allies of the United States and NATO in other ways, that this expectation to be allied with the United States in one context is to be expected to approve of its actions in every other context, and this has brought discredit on a great many multilateral institutions, this American expectation.

The minister started out by saying that Canada supports non-intervention. You either support non-intervention or you do not support non-intervention. You cannot just support non-intervention and then when the United States decides that, in its judgment, the time has now come to violate this provision of the UN Charter and other accepted norms of international law that Canada will respect that judgment. I do not know if I would approve, but I would certainly have felt much better if the United States had sought the opinion of the