

International Relations

very active. In fact, before the Nicaraguan revolution in 1979, Canadians generally knew precious little about a region which basically left them rather indifferent. When the revolution broke out in that country, the then secretary of state for external affairs and now the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands (Miss MacDonald) maintained that Canada should not get involved and that she did not expect Canada to take any special measures to straighten out that country's difficult situation. However, the turn of events in Nicaragua, and more recently in El Salvador, led Canadians to show a growing interest in that region of the world, and we all regret the escalating tension and violence which have characterized the situation in that country for several months.

However, pitiable the situation may appear to us, there are limits to what Canada can and should do in El Salvador or Central America. Canada should not do as the frog in La Fontaine's fable which wanted to get bigger than the bull and did finally burst. This does not mean, Mr. Speaker, that we should ignore this region. Indeed, that is certainly not what the Canadian government is doing. In the past, we have established economic development assistance programs for Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador. Only a few days ago, the Secretary of State for External Affairs announced that Canada would provide over \$4 million worth of wheat to Nicaragua, and we hope that peace will come back to El Salvador so that we may, in co-operation with other countries, help in the economic development of this country which is now rent asunder by savage conflicts which are very costly in terms of human lives.

The hon. member for Oshawa (Mr. Broadbent) has insisted that Canada should take action to allow a negotiated settlement in El Salvador. Mr. Speaker, a negotiated settlement by way of an election is precisely what the government of El Salvador is suggesting. We know that some elements of the conservative forces in that country object to this process, but we are also aware that the socialist forces with whom the hon. member for Oshawa associated lengthily during his recent visit there are also against such a settlement. The government of El Salvador has indicated that it is now willing to have political discussions about the terms of an election to form a constituent assembly in 1982 and a government in 1983. The government of El Salvador has also indicated that it would willingly consider foreign assistance to make it easier to set up the electoral process in acceptable conditions; specifically, the Organization of American States has been mentioned as being able to ensure the holding of an election according to generally accepted democratic standards.

I therefore wonder, Mr. Speaker, whether the hon. member for Oshawa is right in stating bombastically that an election held under international supervision would be a travesty of democracy. The hon. member has also been very critical of the military and economic assistance provided by the United States, contending that this was the equivalent of supporting a

military regime. The government of Canada has clearly stated on several occasions that it disapproves of arms deliveries by any side, but we also believe that if revolutionary forces are determined to overthrow a government, it is quite legitimate to help this government, which actually wants to establish a democratic regime, to protect itself.

Mr. Speaker, much has been said about the military assistance provided by the United States to the government of El Salvador. What we should know in this regard is that this military assistance accounts for a mere quarter of the \$126 million in economic assistance that the United States does provide to El Salvador in the form of credits and balance of payment assistance to allow this strife-ridden country to import goods to feed its people and equipment to operate its industries. It is strange, Mr. Speaker, that the same people who request international economic assistance for Nicaragua denounce at the same time any economic assistance to El Salvador. Apart from the political hue of their respective governments, is there something exclusive to the Nicaraguan people which warrants it being provided with goods and basic necessities that should be denied to the people of El Salvador? Perhaps the hon. member for Oshawa could explain this point later on. The hon. member also maintains that he can see only three possible options in Central America in the years to come. First, a radical change to a regime of the moderate left with a mixed economy in which both the public and private sectors would participate and which would probably remain neutral in its relations with the United States and non-aligned in its relations with the major political blocks. In fact, this seems to be direction in which the government of President Duarte wants to go. The two other alternatives suggested by the hon. member for Oshawa are a radical marxist-leninist non-democratic state dominated regime, hostile to the United States and aligned with the communist block, or else, as a third option, a very oppressive military oligarchy where social change would be met by violence and all human rights would be held in abeyance in order to maintain the status quo.

On the basis of his recent article in the *Toronto Star* I suppose that the hon. member for Oshawa does not favour that last solution not any more than we do. However, as he does not seem to favour the first solution, which is the direction the Duarte government seems to be taking, we must conclude that he would rather accept the second one. I do not think, Mr. Speaker, that the people of El Salvador would agree to that solution. Mr. Speaker, we have already had a debate on the conditions prevailing in El Salvador and I would like to take this opportunity to make a few comments on the whole economic and social conditions in Central America. My comments of course are aimed at El Salvador, but I think that they are also quite relevant in the context of the North-South dialogue and I am convinced of the imperious necessity of considering critical social and economic problems of emergent