

Transcript

Interview with SSEA, CBC Radio Sunday
Morning, Canadian Policy on Central America

Date	June 28, 1983
Number/Numéro	FPR- 0605

CARDY: The turmoil of Central America seems far away from Parliament Hill on a steamy, summer day. In fact, the battle grounds of the isthmus are closer to Ottawa than Ottawa is to Vancouver Island. After decades of neglect Central America is now a priority concern in Canadian foreign policy. In recent months, the Prime Minister's office has received a growing number of letters on the subject. Opposition members of Parliament demand the Liberal Government take an independent stand on Central America. Pauline Jewett, is the N.D.P. Foreign Affairs critic. She says the Prime Minister gives conflicting and contradictory signals.

JEWETT: Canada, in many respects does not seem to have an independent foreign policy. On the one hand the Government does say that countries should have the right of self determination, that there shouldn't be military intervention in their affairs, or in the other intervention, and yet he says that Central America is an area of strategic proportions to the United States, and therefore military intervention is justified.

CARDY: Government critics say Canada lost whatever independence it had in Foreign Policy on Central America when the Reagan administration came to office. Before President Reagan's inauguration, Ottawa was becoming increasingly critical of U.S. policy in the region. University of Toronto political economist. Stephen Clarkson says a major shift in Canadian policy occurred after the inauguration. That's when former Secretary of State Alexander Haig began putting pressure on Canada. Stephen Clarkson.

CLARKSON: Mr. Haig, then Secretary of State got to the Canadians and said this is evidence that Communist arms are coming in or whatever. We don't know what other pressure might have been brought to bear, but we then turned around and said, well no we agree with the Americans. It is a very serious question and it is basically a Communist and anti-Communist issue. So we .. it was quite a clear change of opinion in the Government, which seems to have been based much more on American information than on our own reassessment of the situation.

CARDY: After Mr. Haig's private conversations with Canadian officials, Ottawa's criticism of U.S. involvement in Central America sank to a whisper. Then External Affairs Minister, Mark MacGuigan announced the U.S. could count on Canada's quiet acquiescence to Washington's shipment of offensive arms to El Salvador. Since then, the formulation of Canadian policy has been a delicate balancing act. On one side, our long held Canadian foreign policy principles, such as the right of states to self determination