

Statements by Ministers

We have a role to play in helping to prevent Noriegas. We have a role to play in helping to provide alternatives to intervention because our presence can strengthen initiatives and institutions like the Organization of American States.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): In a calmer part of the Question Period today, I had the opportunity to say to my friend from Winnipeg Transcona that I think it is time for all of us to engage in some new thinking about international events, and I meant that. I think he shares that view, as do others in the House. That means that we have to move away from stereotypes, whether those stereotypes are about the Americans and their motivations or whether they are about proud countries which we cannot dismiss simply because they are small.

For anyone interested in the future of Central America, interested in the principles of democracy, this has been a hard day for anyone concerned about this hemisphere. It involves a situation which we in the government believe is unique. We think, Sir, that we Canadians have a responsibility to make the most of the new situation which has been created by events in Panama, and that is the intent of this government.

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park): Mr. Speaker, when a country holds an election and its leader is chosen by the will of the people, that leader must be recognized and respected as the people's choice because that leader was elected by the most powerful authority, the authority of the secret ballot. Unfortunately, General Noriega refused to acknowledge the results of the democratic elections and the direction in which they were going in Panama this past May.

Our party did not recognize General Noriega as the leader of the Panama and we supported any international efforts toward a peaceful transition from a dictatorship to a democratically elected government.

The Secretary of State for External Affairs mentioned in his comments that efforts were made through the OAS toward a peaceful resolution to this problem and we applaud those attempts. I think this perhaps highlights why our Prime Minister should not have rushed into joining the Organization of American States. Maybe we should have listened to the Canadians who put more stringent conditions on becoming a member of the OAS,

because when one member of OAS attacks another member of OAS without consulting with its members, what is the point of having such an organization?

Canada's foreign policy must be based on certain principles. One of those is upholding the principles of the United Nations charter, especially the article of non-intervention. No country has the right to change circumstances internal to another country by military force without the consent of that country.

• (1835)

Guided by this principle, we expressed our strong disapproval of the United States invasion of Grenada in 1983. The Prime Minister of the day, the Right Hon. Pierre Elliott Trudeau, in response to a question posed by the then Leader of the Opposition, underscored a very important question which I wish to highlight with a quote from *Hansard* of October 25, 1983. The Prime Minister of the day then said:

The United States was certainly entitled to attempt to protect those nationals. Whether it used the only available means and the proper means to protect them is something that we do not know the answer to, because we are not in possession of the facts.

Did the Prime Minister or the Secretary of State for External Affairs obtain facts to determine whether this invasion was the only means to protect the American nationals? Had President Bush called our Prime Minister before the invasion, the Prime Minister would have every right to ask as a member of OAS whether the United States used the only means and the proper means to protect American nationalists in Panama.

Did the killing of one soldier warrant killing dozens of others? We hope that in the future, the President of the United States will consult with its closest neighbour and ally prior to taking drastic action rather than placing a call after the fact.

In the Grenada situation, Canada was allowed to evacuate our nationalists. In the Panama invasion, our neighbour did not give us that courtesy. In his comments today the Secretary of State said that intervention by force is a dangerous precedent, and we note that the United States of America relied on force in the last resort. We on this side of the House agree with the right hon. member's statement. The question that analysts and historians will want to answer is, was this the last resort.