

International Relations

● (1530)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S.O. 58—INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa) moved:

That this House expresses its continuing concern with respect to Canada's international relations and calls on the government to demonstrate a meaningful interest in South and Central America and, in particular, to initiate steps aimed at establishing a negotiated settlement of the tragic civil war in El Salvador.

He said: Madam Speaker, I want to begin my speech by quoting from a newspaper report as follows:

It was on a Sunday that Felix Jimenez decided to leave El Salvador.

He was in church near his home in the Salvadorean capital when suddenly a band of men drove up in unmarked cars. All along the street, people were ordered from their houses.

Soon after, two young men lay dead and 18 others had been bundled into the cars and driven away. They were not heard from again.

That, Mr. Speaker, was from last Saturday's *The Globe and Mail*. Two weeks ago tomorrow I was in the capital of El Salvador and on that particular day 27 bodies turned up in the capital, many decapitated, most of them tortured. The point I am making at this time is that terrorism is all pervasive in that small country to the south of us.

To put it in some kind of perspective for Canadians in particular to relate to, I want to say that the 22,000 men and women who have died so far in that brief war compare exactly numerically to the number of Canadians lost in total during the Second World War, from 1939 through to 1945. In that war we as a nation lost 45,000 killed. Our population at that time was roughly double that of El Salvador today. I repeat: In comparative terms that brief and tragic civil war going on in El Salvador has taken as many lives in roughly 18 months as Canada lost in comparison to our population in the period from 1939 to 1945. It is not a light matter, Mr. Speaker. It is something that should profoundly concern human beings all over this planet, wherever they may live.

I want now to say something about the causes of that conflict because it is very important, if we are going to come to grips in a serious way as a nation and play our role—I will get to that in a minute—and make constructive, workable proposals, that those proposals in fact correspond to the historical reality.

Contrary to what some of us have heard—and some of it has been said in this House—the conflict in El Salvador, that terrible civil war, is in its reality exactly the same as revolutionary situations that have occurred elsewhere in the past. The civil war now being waged is the byproduct of a classic class conflict, one which has arisen because a handful of people have had a disproportionate amount of power and wealth. A very small minority at the top of that small country have controlled the vast majority of wealth and virtually all of the power throughout this century.

Just as it has happened in the past, indeed in the eighteenth century in the United States when power was thought to be unfairly held by the then mother country over the United States, the United States had their revolutionary war. So have other countries in the past, such as the French. The French revolution was a class conflict war. The English had the same in the seventeenth century. Throughout the world historically you get an internally generated crisis of a particular kind that we know as a revolution, and it is a crisis because the vast majority of people finally rise up against those who are attempting to hold them down. That is precisely what is happening in El Salvador.

The conflict is being perpetuated in part because a particularly interesting historical group of Catholic priests in recent years have taken their Christian doctrine quite literally and have, under the profoundly important moral leadership of Archbishop Romero, started to teach a Christian doctrine that says that men and women have a right to certain liberties, including the right to organize their existence, their means of labour and the conditions under which they work in society. So the Christian church has played a profoundly important role, and is doing so today, in what is going on in that conflict in El Salvador.

Another way of expressing a cause of the conflict is by reference to the moderate political leaders, Christian Democrats as well as Social Democrats, who left the junta established some 18 months ago and joined the guerrilla forces because they saw that the junta was not building justice in that land, that indeed it was perpetuating the terror it had ostensibly been set up to deal with.

The conflict is also caused—and this is also very important to note in the context of yesterday's debate—by the indifference to such circumstances by the United States of America, a country which all too often has said vis-à-vis the countries of Central and Latin America that all they require is a government in those countries friendly to the United States. Well, Mr. Speaker, when I visited Central America recently I met a person—I am not at liberty to say where or under what circumstances—who was a man who would describe himself as a devout Christian. He said to me about his country: "The Americans have historically said to us: 'We want a government here friendly to us' ". He said to me: "We Salvadoreans want a government that is friendly to us". There is all the difference. He was saying that it is time that the United States began asking in Central America for governments friendly, not necessarily to themselves, but to the people in those societies.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: The conflict, Mr. Speaker, is being caused by the departure of the humane civilian and military people from the junta established in 1979, people who have had to take up arms to protect themselves, their liberties and their families. They are, I say without exaggeration, in my experience the kind of men and women who would be sitting on both sides of this House, who would be found in the Liberal party, the Conservative party and the New Democratic Party.