and I suspect that it will be given that third reading in due course this afternoon.

Ms. Lynn Hunter (Saanich—Gulf Islands): Mr. Speaker, I rise to support Bill C-25, an Act to amend the Geneva Conventions Act. I want to address my comments on this important bill. It governs the laws applicable in time of armed conflict and it serves to include the additional protections for prisoners of war and the rules regarding children in armed conflict. This is to be applauded although as my hon. colleague has pointed out that being the last decade in this century it seems somehow anachronistic that we are still making rules to govern behaviour in time of war.

There are a number of wars going on in the world currently. These protocols are expanded to the rules not only in international conflicts but to cover civil wars. When I was in Africa, in Eritrea, in 1986, during a civil war, there was no UN observation of the prisoners of war in the region in which I was travelling. Fortunately, I can report to the House that the 10,000 prisoners of war in an open camp, helped by the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front, were being fairly treated in spite of the aerial bombardment of their former comrades in the Ethiopian air force. The Eritrean people managed to try to keep them safe in spite of the ongoing war. The extension of these conventions to include victims of civil war is an important amendment that should be applauded.

I want, in my address this afternoon, to pursue two themes regarding Bill C-25. The Canadian government supports international conventions, and this particular international convention, but there is an inconsistency here with the application to those conventions that Canada has already signed. Previous speakers have addressed a number of examples. I would just like to reiterate a few as well as add a couple.

Second, while working not only to develop rules of conduct for wartime, we should be putting additional resources into the prevention of wars. I have some suggestions on how that can proceed.

Let me turn to my first theme, namely, that there is an inconsistency of Canadian government policy with regard to the application and respect for international conventions.

As this House knows, I travelled to El Salvador last spring during that country's elections. Subsequent to that the ARENA government came to power and we have seen massive violations of human rights under the ARENA government. We have seen the bombing of the civilian population which is in absolute disregard of the UN declaration.

As we have seen on our television screens, there is the kind of mistreatment or lack of treatment accorded to FMLN fighters in the city of San Salvador, where they refused treatment to those wounded in wartime. Yet Canadian silence has encouraged the ARENA government. If there are these international protocols, why do we not speak out more forcefully when they are violated so blatantly as the ARENA government in El Salvador has done?

We cannot do more than pay lip service to these conventions. It is all very well but the signing of them means something more than a just a piece of paper. We have a responsibility to make sure that they are respected.

Then there is the issue of Panama. The Canadian government's support for the American invasion of Panama, I think, has received the kind of reaction from the Canadian media and the Canadian people that it deserved, that it was a direct contravention of the international principles of national sovereignty. This kind of excuse that the Canadian government has given that, "Oh, this was a special case, and that we have to make sure that the Americans are supported in this very special case", is absolutely utter nonsense. If there are international conventions we have to respect them and there are can be no special cases for the violation of national sovereignty. We are talking about the kind of chipping away at what the United Nations is about by that kind of support for such blatant American expansionism as I would like to term it.

• (1310)

There is another example of ignoring an international body's rulings—and I would like to expand on that—and