

HONDURAS ELECTIONS - 24 NOVEMBER 1985

CANADIAN OBSERVERS REPORT

In response to the invitation of the Foreign Minister of Honduras, the Secretary of State for External Affairs designated me as official observer to the combined presidential, congressional and municipal elections on November 24, 1985. My mandate was to observe the electoral process as thoroughly as possible, to make an independent judgement on the quality of the process in the context of generally recognized democratic suffrage, and to report back to the Secretary of State for External Affairs on my observations.

I was accompanied to Honduras by David Bickford, Caribbean and Central America Relations Division of the Department of External Affairs, and in Honduras I was also ably assisted by the Canadian Ambassador to Guatemala, André Potvin and two members of his staff, namely Fred Spoke (Counsellor) and Pierre Giroux (First Secretary). This group divided into three sections and visited polling stations containing over 200 electoral polls in various parts of the country, including: Tegucigalpa, Danli, Santa Lucia, Valle de Angeles, San Pedro Sula, La Paz, Puerto Cortes, Choloma, Comayagua, Sabana Grande, Perspire and Choluteca. At all times we had full freedom to travel and to visit any location in any area of the country. I was provided with support and cooperation, including a guide, driver and car, in order to facilitate verification of the electoral process at the locations of my choosing.

At the official level, the electoral system as designated and developed was excellent and comprehensive including the entire registration process. The only exceptions were the ink and the ballot itself, noted later. The computerization of the results was professional and provided for the proper checks, balances and cross-verification. The system devised for providing results was by telex to the computing centre. However, following the close of the poll, in most cases this did not happen and has delayed the outcome.

At the time this report was issued the full count of ballots cast was not complete and I therefore cannot comment at this stage about the outcome of the election. However, there can be no doubt about the very high level of enthusiasm, patience, good humour and voter participation on election day