

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS--MOTIONS

[English]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

ADVISABILITY OF SIGNING PROTOCOL TO CONTADORA TREATY

Ms. Pauline Jewett (New Westminster—Coquitlam) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should consider the advisability of signing the protocol to the draft Contadora Treaty and thus become an active member of the Contadora Support Group.

● (1700)

She said: Mr. Speaker, no region of the world and no foreign policy issue is of more concern to Canadians than the continuing and tragic conflict in Central America.

As a member of the External Affairs and International Trade Committee of the House, and last year as a member of the special joint committee of the House and Senate studying Canada's international relations, I have been repeatedly impressed by the well articulated and deep concern of thousands of Canadians about Central America. It was Central America that was the issue for which we received the largest number of briefs and presentations at the meetings of the special joint committee.

There is no question about the concern of vast numbers of Canadians. When speaking in the House a week or so ago, my colleague, the Hon. Member for Spadina (Mr. Heap), outlined in great detail the expressions of concern of Canadians and how they were taking real form. He said, "Thousands have been involved for years in the struggle for a just and lasting peace in Central America. They have donated their time, energy, money, and sometimes risked their lives to help Central Americans. There is a Canadian people-to-people peace initiative".

At the present time there is a mission for peace in Nicaragua. This mission for peace is sponsored by Oxfam and the Canadian churches. I am sorry to say that although both the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party sent Members of Parliament on this fact-finding mission for peace, for some reason that I do not understand, the Conservatives refused an invitation to have one of their Members go on this mission for peace this week. According to a newspaper story, apparently the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) refused the invitation to send any Tories with opposition MPs and church groups on the mission for peace to Nicaragua.

As we were recently reminded by the excellent documentary on the CBC television current affairs program *The Journal*, since 1978, 200,000 people have died as a result of the political violence in Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua. Domestic injustice, poverty, oppression, and in some cases state terrorism and violence between states, continue to threaten to escalate further.

Contadora Treaty

In the past, there has been a complete absence of peaceful solutions to the critical problems of the region. The possibilities of escalating military conflict, the absence of peaceful conflict resolution, and the escalating foreign military intervention, primarily from the United States in the form of military support for the Contras, led to an initiative by Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, and Panama.

This initiative sought the creation of a process for conflict resolution and the creation of a peace treaty among the five Central American republics. The initiative was named after the Panamanian island, Contadora, where the Ministers from Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, and Panama initially met. The Contadora initiative provided much needed diplomatic impetus in the region. These efforts resulted in a draft peace treaty, which, I remind the House, met with full Nicaraguan support and the initial support of the other republics. However, the support of Honduras and El Salvador cooled under pressure from Washington.

The Contadora Peace Treaty calls for the reduction and eventual elimination of all foreign military advisers and bases in Central America; a freeze, and then reduction of the level of arms and armed forces in the region; the elimination of arms traffic; and the establishment of verification and control measures with international supervision.

All major Latin American countries quickly formally endorsed the treaty, as did Sweden and France, and formed themselves into the Contadora support group, or the Lima support group, as it is sometimes called.

I, and others in my Party, have repeatedly called on the Government of Canada to endorse the Contadora Treaty and lend Canada's diplomatic weight and concrete efforts to peace in Central America. My Party called for such efforts in great detail at its convention in Ottawa in 1985. In 1985, I also called on the Government to support the plea of the Contadora support group for the resumption of bilateral talks between the United States and Nicaragua.

We have repeatedly urged that Canada actively discourage the United States from its military and financial aid to the Contras. I am sorry to say that we have met with little success. Apparently the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) does raise the issue with the Secretary of State for the United States at their frequent meetings, but the Secretary of State for External Affairs is told that that is simply not an item on the agenda, and the Americans do not wish to listen to what he has to say on that subject.

At an important meeting held recently in southern California, I received copies of all the press coverage on the public part of the meetings. Unfortunately, the Secretary of State for External Affairs said nothing publicly about what he has privately said he opposes vehemently, namely, U.S. administration military support for the Contras who are fighting to overthrow the democratically elected Government of Nicaragua.