

solution that Canada and that others sought. But I think it important to note that the OAS made a serious attempt to succeed, and that, Mr. Speaker, that was a change in itself. It demonstrates a new resolution among members of the Organization of American States, a new resolution that Canada can push forward, and in our judgement, must push forward.

The point to underline, sir, is that Central America is not anybody's backyard. Central America consists of sovereign countries with ambitions of their own, histories of their own, qualities of their own. It is a region which is remarkable for the will that has been demonstrated by its leadership, particularly in the last two and three years, the will to work together and the will to work together against quite extraordinary odds, including the pull of their own history in that region.

Traditionalists have asked why would Canada want to focus on Central America? Why would we be in the Organization of American States? Why would we play the active role that we are in ONUCA, the United Nations Peacekeeping and Verification Agency that is playing a potentially critical role in the region? Why would we maintain our aid and development assistance relations with the five countries involved in the Esquipulas arrangement? Well, we do that, sir, because Central America and Latin America, as a whole, are changing. Changing by their own will.

Carlos Andres Perez, the President of Venezuela, repeated again to me this morning, when I spoke to him to talk about the events in Panama, his profound belief that Canada has a crucial role to play in that region, both because of who we are and because of who we aren't. The role, in his judgement, can be critical if the institutions, and the instinct of reform that have been evident there, are to become as effective as they can be. 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.

Sir, in the Question Period today, 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. And I think he shares that view, and I think others in the House do. That means that we have to