

*Statements by Ministers*

My point of order is to the effect that the Standing Committee on Finance this afternoon passed a resolution:

That a subcommittee of five members be struck to conduct an inquiry and hold hearings early in 1990 into the question of government spending and measures to control its growth.

I humbly submit that this action by the Standing Committee on Finance is *ultra vires* its mandate and I would respectfully request direction from the Chair with respect to this matter.

## SPEAKER'S RULING

**Mr. Speaker:** I think I am obliged to deal with the matter. The hon. member has raised a point which is certainly of interest and it goes to whether or not the sub-committee which the committee has appointed today has embarked on a study of something which is beyond the mandate of the committee.

That is an interesting point but I have to come back to what I have had to say in the past. It is that the committee is the master of its own affairs and I think the hon. member will have to refer back to the committee to deal with it. If the committee should deal with the matter in such a way that it was appropriate that it be brought back to the House as a question of the committee, that is something else again, but at the moment the matter is in the committee's hands.

I appreciate the hon. member's intervention.

[*Translation*]

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Speaker:** Pursuant to order adopted earlier today, the right hon. Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark).

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

## PANAMA

## STATEMENT BY MINISTER

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, there was agreement among members of all parties earlier this afternoon that it would be appropriate for the three parties in this House

to have an opportunity to express their position on the events in Panama.

I have the honour to present a ministerial statement which is a little untraditional. I apologize for not having circulated advance copies to my hon. colleagues in the House but they will understand the circumstances that prevented that.

I thought I would try to do three things. First, report upon the situation in Panama as we know it at this stage; second, review the chain of events which led to the American decision last night; third, present to the House some observations about Panama. That includes the possibility of developing a stable, democratic system in that country, a country and a region which, with less drama than we see in eastern Europe, is setting a remarkable example of democracy and of economic courage. It is important that parliamentarians in this House and countries like Canada help Panama assume its rightful place in that invaluable process.

First I will deal with the situation in Panama as we know it. The House will perhaps know that there are 131 Canadians who are registered as resident in Panama. Some of those are Canadians of dual nationality. We have been in touch, or sought to be in touch, with all of them by telephone, either through our honorary consul in Panama City or through the embassy headquartered in Costa Rica. To the best of our knowledge and our most recent consultations all Canadians are safe. None is in danger.

An official of the embassy based in Costa Rica will be going in to Panama as soon as conditions allow that to be done effectively. Fighting is falling off in Panama City, although there has unhappily been an outbreak of looting now. Perhaps that is a natural consequence of the kind of disorder that can arise in those circumstances. Forces loyal to General Noriega have moved into the countryside. Noriega himself has not been captured.

If there are further developments I will try to have them brought to the attention of members who are interested or will establish a system over the period of the recess in which either members of Parliament or certainly Canadians who have family or interests in Panama will be able to be kept informed.

[*Translation*]

As a founding member and signatory of the United Nations Charter and as a recent signatory of the Charter of the Organization of American States, Canada fully