

Moakley-Studds Exchange

11 April 1991

Exchange between Rep. Gerry E. Studds (D-MA) and Rep. John Joseph Moakley (D-MA) after Moakley testified at April 11, 1991 hearings on El Salvador, conducted by House Foreign Affairs' Western Hemisphere Subcommittee.

Moakley chairs an El Salvador Special Committee, appointed by House Speaker Thomas S. Foley to follow the investigation of the murder of six Jesuit priests and two associates on November 16, 1989. Studds is a member of the Special Committee and of the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee.

Rep. Studds: I notice, in your statement, that you said nice things about the Secretary of State, the Assistant Secretary of State, Ambassador Walker, President Cristiani, the Members of this Subcommittee and even the Republican leadership.

I never realized that South Boston was a breeding ground for such diplomatic skills.

But I also think that there are some pretty good right jabs mixed in with all the praise.

Is it a fair reading of your statement, for example, that the Government of El Salvador is failing to conduct a serious and professional investigation in the Jesuits case and that therefore, by law -- if this Administration had strictly interpreted the law -- El Salvador would not rightfully be entitled to a single penny of U.S. military aid?

Rep. Moakley: Absolutely.

Rep. Studds: Is it a fair reading of your statement that the key to further progress in this case is President Cristiani in large part because he is a good man; he is President of what is supposed to be a democracy; he is, at least theoretically, the Commander in Chief of the armed forces of El Salvador; and he -- more than anyone else -- is in a position to encourage further witnesses to come forward, to protect them if they do, and to see that new information is acted upon, instead of being ignored?

Rep. Moakley: Absolutely.

Rep. Studds: And finally, is it a fair reading of your statement that although it is clear by now that many senior Salvadoran officers knew who was directly involved in the crimes shortly after they were committed; and although this is legitimate cause for outrage; our primary concern should be to identify those who actually participated in, or ordered the crimes. In other words, no officer should hesitate to come forward with information about who committed the crimes out of fear that he will immediately be accused of having helped to cover up the crimes. Our primary interest is not who knew about it; it's who done it ... is that right?

Rep. Moakley: Absolutely.