

This evening, as we honour the memory of the late René Cassin, there is enormous cause for celebration.

The results of this week's referendum in South Africa confirm that there is a spark of understanding hidden deep within the human spirit that will forever seek out the light of freedom. While that spark can be contained -- often for centuries -- it can never be extinguished. For those who have made the pursuit of human rights a lifelong goal, it is further proof that the effort can never be abandoned until all the sparks have been released, so that we can see the world in all its brightness.

I am very honoured to be here today to deliver the fourth René Cassin lectureship in human rights.

### **Law and Government: Partners in Human Rights**

In the first four years of this prestigious series, you have chosen as your speakers two outstanding Canadian jurists, Madame Justice Claire L'Heureux-Dubé and Justice Walter Tarnopolsky, and two Canadian diplomats, Yves Fortier and myself.

I believe that you have found the right balance for an examination of human rights in the world today: on the one hand, law, and on the other hand, government action. On one side, the principles and values that must be encoded, and on the other side, the institutions and powers of government to implement them.

But the fulcrum of that balance is the individual. Personal well-being and the development and enhancement of the human condition are the ultimate tests of laws, institutions and governments.

### **Pluralism Brings Unpredictability**

We are living during an extraordinary moment in history. With the end of the Cold War, the world is faced with new forces, many of them pulling in opposite directions.

In a recent speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Vaclav Havel, President of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, observed that the end of Communism brought to an end not just the 19th and 20th centuries, but the modern age as a whole. He equates the fall of Communism with victory for life, human individuality and pluralism over misplaced confidence in systems and social design. He sees the salvation of civilization not simply in our abilities, but in the soundness of our values and instincts.

There does appear to be an increasingly widespread commitment to democracy, pluralism and individual rights. But with this liberation of human impulses, with all their unpredictability,