

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

IT GIVES ME PARTICULAR PLEASURE TO BE SPEAKING FOR THE FIRST TIME TO A MEETING OF THE B'NAI BRITH, AS SO MANY OF MY PREDECESSORS HAVE DONE BEFORE ME. I AM TOLD THAT THE TORONTO REGIONAL COUNCIL ACTS AS A CO-ORDINATING GROUP FOR 28 B'NAI BRITH LODGES TOTALLING AROUND 4,000 MEMBERS. THAT IS IMPRESSIVE AND EXPLAINS AT LEAST IN PART WHY YOUR ASSOCIATION HAS BEEN ABLE TO MAKE SUCH A CONTRIBUTION ON ISSUES OF CONCERN TO THE CANADIAN JEWISH COMMUNITY BUT ALSO ON ISSUES TOUCHING ALL CANADIANS. I AM THINKING IN PARTICULAR OF YOUR EFFORTS TO PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS, AND TO OPPOSE DISCRIMINATION AND BIGOTRY, BUT I AM VERY MUCH AWARE OF WHAT THE "SONS OF THE COVENANT" DO AND HAVE BEEN DOING SINCE 1875, WHEN THE FIRST LODGES WERE ESTABLISHED IN TORONTO, IN A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT AREAS RELATED TO COMMUNITY SERVICES SUCH AS YOUTH PROGRAMMES, HOMES FOR THE AGED, CONSTRUCTION OF HOSPITALS, ETC.

LET ME SAY HERE HOW WE WERE ALL SHOCKED AT THE RECENT HOSTAGE-TAKING INCIDENT INVOLVING, AMONG OTHERS, YOUR SISTER ORGANIZATION IN WASHINGTON. SUCH SENSELESS TERRORIST-LIKE ACTIVITIES ARE ABHORENT. I AM SURE YOU WERE ALL RELIEVED, AS I WAS, TO HEAR THAT THE INCIDENT IS NOW OVER.

THIS MORNING I PROPOSE TO SHARE WITH YOU SOME IMPRESSIONS AND VIEWS ON TOPICS WHICH I KNOW ARE OF PARTICULAR INTEREST TO YOU.

THE ISSUE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IS COMMANDING SIGNIFICANTLY GREATER ATTENTION ON A GLOBAL SCALE, AND I RECOGNIZE AND APPRECIATE NOT ONLY THE CONSIDERABLE EFFORTS YOU ARE MAKING IN THIS FIELD BUT ALSO THE VERY SPECIAL MEANING OR RELEVANCE THIS HAS FOR MANY OF YOU. I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT YOUR CONCERN WITH THIS ISSUE AND THAT FELT BY MANY CANADIANS IS ENDORSED FULLY BY THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT, AND WE ARE DETERMINED TO CONVEY OUR SENTIMENTS AND VIEWS IN THE CHANNELS OPEN TO US. YOU ARE AWARE, I AM SURE, OF THE ACTION TAKEN BY PARLIAMENT ON FEBRUARY 15 WHEN IT WAS DECIDED TO CONVEY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE SOVIET UNION THE DISAPPOINTMENT AND DEEP CONCERN OF THE CANADIAN PEOPLE AT THE ARREST OF CERTAIN PROMINENT SOVIET CITIZENS WHO WERE ENDEAVOURING TO ENSURE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HELSINKI AGREEMENT. YOU MAY ALSO KNOW OF THE PERSISTENT MANNER IN WHICH WE HAVE SOUGHT TO RESOLVE INDIVIDUAL CASES OF FAMILY REUNIFICATION, MANY INVOLVING JEWISH FAMILIES. WHILE WE HAVE HAD SOME CONSIDERABLE SUCCESS ON THAT FRONT - MOST EASTERN EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS HAVE MADE ATTEMPTS TO IMPROVE THE CURRENT SITUATION - WE BELIEVE MUCH MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE AND CAN BE DONE. LATER THIS YEAR WHEN THE PARTIES TO THE HELSINKI ACCORD MEET IN BELGRADE FOR THE FIRST FORMAL REVIEW, THE CANADIAN DELEGATION WILL SPEAK WITH CONVICTION AND WITH RESOLVE ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE. IT IS AN AREA WE HAVE CONCENTRATED ON FROM THE BEGINNING AND WHICH WILL CONTINUE TO BE THE FOCAL POINT FOR OUR ACTIVITIES.