

As we assess human rights, we want to see what a particular country is doing in the whole concept of development. Nicaragua is a good example.

While some people have complained that certain rights and liberties have had to be suspended during a period of crisis, it is a country that is under seige. The American Government is financing a Contra movement that is working to destabilize the whole economy and working to destroy the whole process of development. Yet, since the revolution, Nicaragua has had one of the most remarkable achievements of development in terms of education and health. It has had one of the best records in Central America in terms of being able to make effective use of Canadian development assistance.

When one considers the total picture in a country like Nicaragua, one sees that it has a good human rights situation, even though there are one or two areas where certain human rights have had to be curtailed because of the political crisis that has resulted from the American funded Contra attack upon that country.

The committee goes on to recommend that a human rights unit be established in the Policy Branch of CIDA, and that it develop a human rights grid in line with what the committee recommends. The committee recommends that there be four categories: human rights negative, human rights watch, human rights satisfactory, and human rights positive. In other words, we would attempt to consider the whole situation of a country and apply that situation to a grid to determine whether, for example, the human rights situation in that country is so negative that it stands in universal condemnation. In that case, there should be no bilateral aid.

Human rights watch indicates that there are problems but we believe there are still possibilities. We would not want to rule out the possibility of Canadian aid in those areas. Human rights satisfactory means that we would want to be able to provide aid. Finally, human rights positive refers to situations where a country has made great strides in improving human rights.

In conclusion, I want to indicate our support for the whole concept of human rights, and the Helsinki Human Rights Day on August 1. Wherever a spotlight can be brought on the need for improvements in human rights, we in our Party will support it.

Mr. Reginald Stackhouse (Scarborough West): Madam Speaker, I wish there was time available to do justice to the motion and the message that it communicates. However, looking at the clock, I see that our time is running out very quickly, and if there is agreement in the House it might be possible for us to vote on this motion now because of the unanimous support which I detect from Members representing all Parties.

I would welcome such support both as a colleague of the mover of the motion in the House and in the Committee on Human Rights.

Helsinki Human Rights Day

I am sure that I represent the general opinion of the House in supporting the mover of this motion and the intent of the motion. The great value of a motion such as this and the idea that it advocates, namely an annual remembrance of the Helsinki Human Rights Accords, is that it will raise the consciousness of our people about human rights and continue to maintain that consciousness year by year. It is absolutely vital, particularly in a democracy, that such a message not simply be a commitment on paper but that it be incarnated in the interest, devotion and sense of men and women throughout the land.

The message of human rights is part of the political obligation of every Government of the world. We recognized in our signing of the accords that we have a responsibility to concern ourselves with human rights in other parts of the world because they are the rights of men and women who share our humanity. They share with us this world and our humanity and we have a common obligation to them.

It has also been pointed out that we have a responsibility in that our commitment to human rights is such that when we speak to the world we can speak with sincerity, integrity and effect.

This is a subject that calls forth from the heart and the mind. There is much that might be shared but, alas, time is running out and I want to give an opportunity to speak to my distinguished colleague, the Hon. Member for Louis-Hébert (Mrs. Duplessis).

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Suzanne Duplessis (Louis-Hébert): Madam Speaker, I take great pleasure today in joining my colleagues in their support for the motion presented by the Hon. Member for Parkdale—High Park (Mr. Witer).

His proposal that August 1 should be designated "Helsinki Human Rights Day" is indeed appropriate, because it expresses the profound sentiment that is felt by every person in this country. Madam Speaker, there is not a single person in Canada who is not concerned about this problem. The Hon. Member's proposal also addresses the vital role of the CSCE in seeking a greater element of trust and stability in East-West relations. Finally, it reflects the role of human rights in developing the trust that is a prerequisite for any tangible improvement in East-West relations. For Canada, human rights are a moral obligation. They are the expression in concrete terms of our obligation to respect others. Furthermore, they are the keystone of our democracy and the foundation of our civilization, because full respect for these rights opens the door to the free exchange of ideas that is the source of all creativity. Over the years, the Canadian Government has made a tremendous effort to reinforce the protection of these rights in Canada by enshrining them in the Constitution.

Our support for human rights does not stop at our borders. Since the Second World War, we have signed universal