

thus expose themselves to the implementation procedures which exist. For example, at present, only 77 states, not quite half of the UN member states have ratified the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Of these, only Canada and 30 others have ratified the Optional Protocol to that Covenant, giving individuals a right of appeal to an international panel, the Human Rights Committee. Since human rights problems, in their nature, involve disputes between the individual and his government, that individual's right of petition is crucial to the real defense of human rights. It is heartening that more states are joining in. Some have learned the hard way; Bolivia recently signed the Optional Protocol on its return to civilian government, and the new government of Argentina has legislation before its congress to permit ratification of both basic Covenants and the Optional Protocol. As usual the revolution is evolutionary!

At the United Nations and in its bilateral relations with other states Canada will have to continue to push the slow, incremental process of bringing more states into the network of treaty law, and in improving the means of bringing states to implement such laws.

This brings me to a second set of considerations, on the role of Canada in this area of human rights.

Canada and the Battle for Human Rights at the International Level

This year Canada shall be completing a series of three successive terms - a total of nine years - of membership on the United Nations Commission for Human Rights. It is mainly in this Commission that agreement must be reached on the definition of international standards in human rights, and where new ways of encouraging the practical attainment of these standards must be developed.

During these nine years Canada has been among the most active members of the Commission, with a strong delegation which has been led throughout this period by Ambassador Yvon Beaulne. Ambassador Beaulne is now retiring, but he has left his stamp on the work of the Commission, and on the Department which he has served so well. His strong personal conviction, and his great negotiating skill, have produced solutions to many issues in which the lines of battle were firmly drawn, and passions high. He has also served as an inspiration to all who have worked with him in this field, and he leaves behind a considerable number of officers - a human rights "Ginger Group" - who are personally committed to seeing the good work go forward.