

we truly believe in offering support to newly-emerging democracies as they establish their parliamentary institutions, surely we can find some small way to assist these representatives in having the opportunity to meet on a regular basis with their parliamentary colleagues.

Turning now to the conference agenda, there were three main subjects, the first of which was a discussion of "human development: economic growth and democracy". Our colleague, Senator Haidasz, was one of two Canadians who spoke on the topic of Canadian multiculturalism policy and the need for a stronger protection of minorities who are often the target of genocide.

Another topic was support for greater liberalization of international trade. Our colleague Senator Bosa, who spoke just the other day about this matter, did excellent work on the drafting committee to prepare a resolution for presentation which was accepted at the final plenary session.

Before concluding my remarks I would like to mention the work of our colleague Senator Neiman on the Committee on Human Rights and Parliamentarians. This committee was established in 1977. It examines cases of members of national parliaments who are subjected to internment, for example. Senator Neiman was elected to a five-year term in 1988. This is a personal appointment and cannot be transferred to another delegate from Canada. Serving on this committee is a very time-consuming task. Not only does it meet throughout each of the statutory conferences, it also meets in Geneva twice a year to examine the progress of various cases. At any one time there are usually 70 or 80 cases of parliamentarians who are in prison because of their views.

In Santiago, the committee reported on the violations of the human rights of 75 members or former members of parliament in seven countries. A significant majority of these, 65 of them, are cases from Myanmar, formerly known as Burma. The IPU was so concerned about the conditions in Myanmar and the lack of progress in obtaining information from the authorities that it has asked for an IPU mission to conduct an on-site investigation. In the past, these visits have been somewhat productive.

You may recall that a couple of years ago Senator Neiman reported to us about taking their committee right to Indonesia and Malaysia. That had the effect of obtaining the release of people who had spent many years behind bars because of political beliefs. Only two days ago the family of the leader of the opposition in Myanmar received on her behalf the Nobel prize, she being still under house arrest in her own country.

I raise this subject because of the importance of protecting the human rights of parliamentarians. I urge honourable colleagues to consider ways in which we can exert pressure on the authorities of places like Myanmar to release people presently either under house arrest or in prison.

This conference was filled with a range of experiences. With our Chilean hosts we celebrated the return of democracy and appreciated the difficulties facing the parliament as it deals with the aftermath of human rights abuses during this military

regime. With the three Baltic legislators we were aware of the importance of establishing democratic parliamentary institutions and the need for support to newly-emerging democracies. With the examination of these many cases in Myanmar including, as I have mentioned, the leader of the opposition under house arrest, we were reminded that much work remains in the protection of human rights and the promotion of democratic principles.

One of the main purposes of the union is to work for peace and cooperation among peoples by fostering contacts and exchange of experiences among parliamentarians and parliaments. All of us who participated in the Santiago conference returned with a strong sense of the importance of democratic institutions and of the need for support for those countries which are struggling to achieve democracy. I commend the report to you.

Senator Bosa: Honourable senators, I wonder if I could adjourn the—

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I must inform the Senate that if the honourable Senator Bosa speaks now, his speech will have the effect of closing the debate.

Senator Bosa: I do not intend to speak, honourable senators. I was just wondering whether I should adjourn the debate in the name of Senator Neiman, who is presently attending the joint Senate and House of Commons Committee on National Unity. She may wish to make a few remarks. I do not know if Senator Nurgitz is aware of whether she will want to say something, but we can make the opportunity available for her to do so.

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

On motion of Senator Bosa, for Senator Neiman, debate adjourned.

COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

TWENTY-FIRST CONFERENCE OF THE CARIBBEAN, THE AMERICAS AND THE ATLANTIC REGION IN PORT OF SPAIN, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO—DEBATE CONCLUDED

On the Order:

Resuming the debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Macquarrie, calling the attention of the Senate to the Twenty-First Conference of the Caribbean, the Americas and the Atlantic Region of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association held at Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, 12th to 18th May, 1991.—(*Honourable Senator Macquarrie*).

Hon. Heath Macquarrie: Honourable senators, as I said the other day, I was very happy to be the Canadian observer-delegate at the conference in Trinidad and Tobago some weeks ago because of the great importance of our relations with that part of the world, the Commonwealth Caribbean. One of the great studies done by the Senate Foreign Affairs committee was that done in 1970, when Senator Aird was the chairman and Senator Grosart the vice-chairman, regarding Canadian relations with the Commonwealth Caribbean. That study is a