

heavy hand of oppression in the Soviet bloc, seeking to stifle freedom of religious expression, trade union rights and every legitimate aspiration to self-determination.

That such concerns remain a fundamental and integral part of Canadian foreign policy was underscored in the recent report of the Special Joint Parliamentary Committee on Canada's International Relations. Following discussions with citizens in every region of Canada, the Committee expressed the view that "the promotion of human rights is a vital and natural expression not only of Canadian values but also of universal values to which all governments, like individuals, are subject".

The United Nations is an organization of governments. But our concerns are less with the immediate proprieties of state-to-state relations than with a fundamental concern for people. These concerns are elemental: all people have a right to live in dignity; they have a right to the freedom essential to the full development of their capabilities; they have a right to live without fear of reprisal and intimidation; they have a right to transmit to succeeding generations values of decency, integrity, generosity and compassion.

Why should the espousal of these principles engender conflict? On what basis can other governments take offence at these sentiments? Let me elaborate by way of illustration. During the 1970s, Canada raised in this forum two of the most egregious human rights situations of that era - Uganda and Argentina. In reply, we were threatened with actions by the Organization of African Unity, to which Uganda belonged, and with bilateral economic sanctions by Argentina which was, of course, a member of the Latin American group. And then, within a few years, both governments changed. Both appointed new representatives to speak for their governments and for their new situations. Both appreciated the limited measures taken by this body in an effort to promote constructive change. Both bore witness to the need for stronger procedures to prevent the violations of human rights which had taken place in their respective countries, perpetrated by governments which had lost all moral authority in the eyes of their people.

These examples raise disturbing questions. What might have happened in other situations had this organization taken stronger action at the right moment? In the 1940s, when we began deliberations on procedures for the protection of human rights, we might have prevented - had we acted - the drift to South African racism so that today we would not be faced with the polarizing scourge of apartheid. Had this organization responded to evidence of flagrant violations committed by the government of the Shah of Iran, we might have spared that country