

CANADIAN POSITION

Canada is taking pains to establish a constructive dialogue with China on the human rights question, having expressed its concerns both during this year's frequent high-level bilateral meetings (including the meeting between prime ministers Chrétien and Li Peng), and in international fora, particularly the CHR.

At the CHR last spring, Canada co-sponsored a draft resolution on human rights in China. The resolution expressed concern over constant reports of violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in China. It invited China to take measures to respect these rights for all, including women, and to continue cooperating with UN special rapporteurs and working groups. The resolution also asked for a special report to be produced on human rights in China. Unfortunately, a majority of countries voted in favour of a Chinese proposal that no decision be made on the draft resolution.

Another aspect of Canada's human rights policy is known as "constructive engagement". In cooperation with the Chinese authorities, the aim is to establish programs which are designed to enhance China's legal and judicial structures. In so doing, Canada is helping to establish in China a state based on due process which is considered the best guarantee against political arbitrariness and human rights violations. Other programs include exchanges and lectures on the democratic system for Chinese audiences sensitive to these concepts, chosen in accordance with the influence they have in their particular circles. The ultimate goal is to help establish democratic structures to end, or at least limit, political arbitrariness and the human rights violations stemming from it.

The Canadian government realizes that this policy of "constructive engagement" will not bring about major changes in the human rights situation in China in the short term, there being no strong private sector and no NGO network on which it might rest. This policy is producing a measure of progress and cooperation with China in the field of human rights. Accordingly, a productive dialogue on the subject is developing between our two countries.