

in the way of conscientious performance. We are not, after all, writing on an unwritten page. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is common ground between us. So, between many of us, are the relevant international covenants. The Final Act itself, in declaring human rights to derive from "the inherent dignity of the human person", has surely dispelled whatever doubt there may have been of where our obligations lie.

All our governments could probably claim to have put in place an adequate legislative basis for assuring the observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms. But concepts in this field are evolving and there is a need to ensure that this evolution is progressively reflected in our laws. We also have to consider that our systems are not perfect. All too often, there is a gap between what is prescribed in the statute book and what is vouchsafed in practice. We acknowledge that it is the responsibility of each government to see that such a gap does not develop and that, where it has developed, steps are taken to remedy it. But we also accept the right, in Canada as elsewhere, of individual citizens to concern themselves with these matters and to enter into a dialogue with their governments where precept and practice appear to diverge.

In raising these issues in Belgrade, our purpose is not to create confrontation. Nor is it to arrest the course of *détente*. Our concern, in fact, is just the reverse. The Canadian Government has itself undertaken obligations at Helsinki in the matter of human rights. We are prepared to be held to these obligations by Canadians, as well as by governments whose signatures are affixed to the Final Act with ours. We are prepared to see our performance subjected to scrutiny where it is open to challenge and to bring our laws and our practices into conformity with the obligations we have assumed where that is not already the case.

The dispositions of the Final Act in the matter of human contacts are of special concern to Canadians. We are a country of settlement, some of it recent, and many Canadian have continuing family links in Europe. The Canadian Government has pursued a policy that attaches priority to the reunification of families. It has looked to the Final Act to break the impasse that has often inhibited the pursuit of that policy.

In point of fact, the Final Act has brought about improvements in the past two years. There are still many cases outstanding, but we have been encouraged by indications that governments are prepared to take this matter seriously. What is less encouraging is that such progress as has been made is still not automatic. It has been achieved at the cost of considerable effort and even hardship on the part of those desiring to join their families. It is not yet a simple matter for people to move from one country to another if they wish. The administrative barriers are often formidable even where those involved no longer form part of the active working population of their countries. It is our hope that one of the results of our meeting will be a more generous and humane interpretation of the family-reunification clauses of the Final Act, not as an exception but as a matter of general policy and practice. If that were achievable here at Belgrade, it would help more than anything else to lend credibility to our efforts in the eyes of Canadians.

Indeed, the factor of credibility could be crucial to public support for *détente* in Can-

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