

*Human Rights*

down criteria and trying to be objective. I hope it will flourish and that its title and finances will be reviewed.

I also hope that it will pass this House in all stages today, obviously because of pressing concerns of time. In saying that, I do think there should be further discussion on an objective basis with people from the human rights field and all political Parties in order to make it the vehicle Canadians want it to be, an effective, objective and humane institution which all of us can support. I commend all those involved in its conception and now in its fulfilment.

**Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—Walkerville):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak in fundamental support of this Bill on behalf of my Party. It was introduced by my friend from Scarborough West and I congratulate him. I know he feels sincerely about the issues this legislation attempts to address. I am pleased to hear that the honourable Liberal Member has spoken in support of this Bill. That indicates fundamental support among all three Parties for the legislation.

Most Canadians, when they consider our contribution to international aid, believe we are attempting to contribute to something besides technical and economic development. I think there is a perception that Canada has certain other goals in mind when it provides aid, particularly to developing nations, with respect to the development of an environment in those countries which is respectful of human rights and pointing ultimately to the development of democratic institutions. Therefore, in a certain sense what we have here is kind of a motherhood thing, but all too often Canadians are confused by the fact that in certain nations there are crises precipitated due to infringements on the human rights of their citizens. There are any number of examples that could be cited.

● (1210)

Not too long ago a delegation made up of all three Parties went to Haiti to look at a situation in which democratic processes and human rights were being severely abused. The question arose as to how it is possible for Canada to provide bilateral aid or any aid that implies a relationship with a Government which would treat its citizens so badly.

My hon. colleague from the Official Opposition cited Burundi. In recent weeks Burundi has certainly raised that question once again in the minds of Canadians. We could cite Nicaragua, El Salvador, Chile, and Indonesia. All around the world there are developing nations which Canada tries to support in their progress, both on the economic and technological fronts, which nations call into question, such as whether Canada is in fact making any significant contribution to the development of democracy around the world.

This question has bothered parliamentarians. As my colleague indicated, a number of committees have addressed the issue. The Human Rights Committee of the House of Commons has studied, it as did the Standing Committee on

External Affairs and International Trade in 1987. The Special Joint Committee on Canada's International Relations also addressed the issue. As my colleague indicated, one of those committees indicated the necessity of having a set of criteria, a categorization of the countries to which Canada contributes aid which would relate the kind of aid and the delivery mechanisms of that aid to the human rights standards and practices of the various countries to which that aid would be distributed.

There is a great deal of concern that Canada, in providing overseas development aid, not be neutral in respect to the nature of the environment in which the people live, but rather that Canada's international aid have a purpose. One recognizes that meeting the elementary needs like food, clothing, housing, and so on are the key to the development of democracy, but you cannot have the development of democracy, even if all of those needs are met, if Governments suppress their own people, if human rights are abused, and if there is no progress toward the evolution of democracy.

This matter has been addressed in a number of ways. Two committees suggested the establishment of an international centre for human rights and democratic development. In 1986 the special joint committee recommended as follows:

—we recommend that the government consider establishing an International Institute of Human Rights and Democratic Development with carefully prepared guidelines for supporting activities by non-governmental organizations. To ensure that the Institute is sensitive to the varying national perspectives on democratic development, particularly in the Third World, we recommend that its board of directors include international representation, on the model of the International Development Research Centre.

*For Whose Benefit* also recommended essentially the same thing. It said:

The Committee therefore recommends that the International Institute for Human Rights and Democratic Development carry out its distinct mandate as an independent, free-standing body working closely with Canadian human rights groups and non-governmental organizations.

One of the problems which arises in considering the nature, structure, and terms of reference of this new centre is that, as I indicated earlier, it refers to itself as an International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development. A number of non-governmental organizations have expressed concern that while the Bill attends, in respect to human rights, to a kind of definition by saying that for the purpose of this Act the International Bill of Rights will constitute the reference and source for adjudicating what constitutes human rights, it fails to deal with what constitutes democracy and democratic development.

One of the concerns which all committees and very many parliamentarians have had is that Canada seeks to enhance human rights and democracy by a means which would not impose on other nations our own institutions and values. I would have to say that if we are unable at least to define democracy in terms of values then we have no goal in mind. We could not possibly know what it is we are trying to further by the establishment of this kind of institution.