

people of whatever faith in the Soviet Union are not able to obtain the materials which are necessary for the free practice of their religion.

Mr. Wenman: Sit down.

Mr. MacGuigan: I do not understand clearly the words the hon. member opposite is saying, but I believe he is probably not aware of the fact that this resolution could not be passed by the House in its present form. I recognize that when the hon. member introduced this resolution this matter was before the conference, but there is no way now that we can pass a resolution in this House which says that we should do something at a conference which is already over.

Mr. Wenman: Amend the resolution.

Mr. MacGuigan: Great as are the powers of this government and its good intentions, even it cannot undo what has already been done.

The Soviet Union has replied and will undoubtedly continue to reply—unfortunately—that freedom of religion exists in the Soviet Union, that what limitations there are and what apparent hindrances exist are not real impediments and are in any case matters of purely internal Soviet concern. The Soviet Union has been very firm in stating that it will not tolerate interference in its affairs and has indicated clearly that it will resist outside pressures which it feels are intended not to meet human rights purposes but to undermine the strength of Soviet Union control. In practice, however, the Soviet Union normally sees all pressure of this kind as directed toward weakening its control and seems unable to distinguish a category of outside pressure which would be seen by others as directed only at human rights.

Détente in terms of east-west relations is an important process for both sides. As such, we must all work to further it, but this can be done only if there is an increased understanding between the people of the east and the west. Such improved understanding is possible only if both sides can accept fully that basic human rights must be respected. In the present circumstances respect for human rights is the main yardstick people in the west use for measuring progress in détente.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the hon. member would entertain a question.

Mr. MacGuigan: Certainly, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Friesen: It is the intention of the hon. member to talk this resolution out anyway. The hon. member says he believes in détente and that getting to understanding each other better is an important experience which we must go through. I wonder if the hon. member feels the same way with regard to South Africa.

Mr. MacGuigan: Mr. Speaker, the problem we have with South Africa is different from the problem we have with the Soviet Union. However, with respect to questions of human rights there is no difference between the standard I expect from the government of South Africa and that which I expect

Bibles

from the Soviet Union. From my point of view, I am not very satisfied with the practice of human rights in either of those states.

Mr. Wenman: Would you accept an amendment then?

Mr. MacGuigan: It is not for me to accept or reject amendments. My purpose is to express my views on this important issue of the day.

The Belgrade meeting of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe is over. It ended without a substantive concluding document which spelled out any progress in the human rights field. However, the meeting did take place and during it a thorough review was made of the provisions of the Helsinki Final Act which covers explicitly the issues we are discussing here. Canada made it very clear that its people expect progress in areas such as human rights, including particularly freedom of religion and the free flow of information and printed material.

I want here to express the gratitude which many people in Canada feel to the Minister of State (Multiculturalism) (Mr. Cafik) for the strong position he took on behalf of our government at the Belgrade conference. We were able to send many observers from this House who contributed to the discussions and to our understanding of the problem, but it was especially fortunate that we were able to send the Minister of State (Multiculturalism) to make the final statement for our government at the conclusion of that conference.

It is impossible for us to force the Soviet Union to make specific concessions in this area. International relations do not work that way, so it would not be possible to obtain a guarantee as such, to use the word which the motion uses. However, the Soviet Union must be made aware, and has been made aware by our minister and by our government, of the concern of the Canadian people in this matter, and it should have no doubts in the future about the intention of the Canadian people as a whole to pursue this matter further.

Freedom to import bibles and other religious materials is one specific example of an area in which progress must be made in human rights if the CSCE and détente are to be seen by the people of Canada and by the people of the world as valid processes.

Some people will raise the question of whether the whole process of Helsinki and the follow-up conference in Belgrade were worth while. I want to quote briefly from the words of the Minister of State (Multiculturalism), who said the following at Belgrade on behalf of our government and our country:

We had hoped that Belgrade would be the occasion for all signatory governments not only to reaffirm their pledges to respect human rights, but also to act on them. We have never claimed that human rights are all there is to détente. What we have claimed and what we do claim is that, to the extent that détente rests on confidence, we cannot muster that confidence among our citizens unless it is seen to have a human dimension. Respect for human rights is part of the structure and balance of the Final Act.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but the hour provided for the consideration of