

Dr. Humphrey, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a pleasure to be with you today for your ninth annual conference on human rights and foreign policy. The subject is one that has preoccupied - and often discomfited - governments throughout the Western world. So I am grateful for the opportunity to share with you the perspective from which we have approached this most difficult and emotionally charged issue.

Let me begin by asserting that the first responsibility of policy-makers has always been to protect and promote the national interest, and to conduct relations with other countries accordingly. But if the 20th century has taught us anything, it is that the single-minded pursuit of one's own political or economic advantage is a formula for disaster. While there may be short-term returns, in the long run everyone loses when one nation's benefits are secured at the expense of another's. The result invariably has been war, whether military or commercial. And even when you win, you lose. In an age of interdependence, nations share the consequences of both victory and defeat.

What we have learned this century, then, is that the global community is better managed cooperatively than by a handful of powerful states in competition with each other. What we need to focus on now is the direction in which we would like to see the global community evolve - during the rest of this century and into the next. Here let us have no illusions. The world is not agreed on the question, and ideologies compete - sometimes ferociously - for the right to determine how we all should live.

The Canadian interest, therefore, is more than a matter of political and economic gain. It is also a matter of ensuring that the international environment develops in a way which is compatible with our basic values, with how we believe human beings should treat each other, with how they should be treated by the state, and with how states should treat each other.

Concern that the fundamental values in which Canadians believe should be reflected in Canadian foreign policy is a longstanding tradition. It is a concern which has been most prominent in the post-war period.

We did not just help to found the U.N. in 1945. We helped to write its charter, to ensure it reflected our views about how the world should be managed in the interests of international peace and security and respect for the rights of peoples and individuals. And in the years that followed Canadians, such as John Humphrey, played an enormous part in