

Canadian views. Since success depends often upon discretion, it is not an area in which the Department of External Affairs will ever be able to claim much credit for its efforts, but it is certainly a field in which departmental activities have increased greatly over the past ten years, and I think will continue to increase.

The government of Canada is often told to limit development assistance to those developing countries in which the human rights situation gives cause for concern. We resist the invitation most of the time. By decreasing our bilateral assistance to express displeasure with the conduct of existing regimes, we might well indeed be prolonging and even adding to the hardship of the people we seek to assist, punishing them for the sins of their government. But there will be times when we will feel compelled to suspend bilateral assistance, as was done most recently in the cases of Guatemala and El Salvador. Such decisions must always be taken with considerable regret, in sorrow more than in anger, and only in extreme circumstances.

Indeed, in withdrawing assistance, we remove an important element in our influence for effecting gradual improvement in these matters.

Similar considerations must apply to Canada's voting for or against development programs and projects of the World Bank or other international development and financial institutions, with the added consideration that these organizations are generally bound by their charters to consider only economic and technical, not political, criteria. It has been our policy to respect that rule, sometimes with a certain regret, and with the consolation that such projects take a long time to become realities, time which may allow for behavioural changes prompted by other external and internal influences. I think we must continue to follow this policy, if only to keep the international institutions from becoming battlegrounds for conflicting political pressures.

We have, I think, a record for the protection and promotion of human rights abroad of which we can be justly proud. Canada's able representatives in embassies and on human rights bodies abroad have credibility mainly because we are recognized as practising — generally speaking — what we preach.

It is normal that our external relations should reflect the remarkable growth in the respect for human rights which has been seen in Canada in recent years. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms which now forms part of the Canadian Constitution serves as the cap-stone of a complex and comprehensive structure of federal and provincial legislation and administrative processes, all designed to protect the individual from injustice and discrimination, and to enhance the rights of groups who may be at a disadvantage. In this last vein there have been solid efforts made on all fronts to improve the lot of our native population, the handicapped, women, children, and others whose rights may be particularly vulnerable.

It is natural that we should wish to project these efforts abroad, but we must not think that this is a one-way street. Many concepts that we considered part of our heritage have been given clearer definition and added force from being tested in the international arena, and have returned to be incorporated into new Canadian legislation, or to be used as general guidance by our courts. Consequently, in this and in many other ways, the continued efforts of Canada to protect and promote human rights everywhere will be in our own Canadian interest.

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