

aspects in mind, it is to be expected that governments will approach the matter of group rights with considerable caution.

The sensitivity of the subject, and the wide variety of what may be desirable or possible in each particular state, has delayed the development in the United Nations of any universal guidelines on group rights. The last forty years have seen the successful elaboration of standards of human rights, and the development of international processes which encourage their implementation. But the concern has been primarily with the rights of individuals. Whenever it has been suggested that similar consideration should be given to the rights of minorities, this has been resisted by some states with the argument that since they themselves contain no minorities, there could be no universal consideration of the matter. This, more often than not, is a statement of policy rather than of fact, because all states contain minority groups of some sort.

Others have argued that the increasing development of the rights of individuals would eliminate the need for any special treatment for groups of persons. This may be true to the extent that prohibiting discrimination may protect individuals in a particular community from abuse. But human rights standards for individuals cannot provide the positive elements, involving some special privileges, required to establish the rights of a minority.

These considerations may have been responsible for the very limited treatment the rights of minorities have received in the United Nations. Article 27 of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights speaks only of the rights of persons belonging to minorities, rather than of any rights of the groups themselves. Minority rights being such a combustible subject in the European context, identical language had to be used in the Helsinki Final Act. It will no doubt come into play at the Meeting of Human Rights Experts which Canada will host in Ottawa from late April to early June as part of the process of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). I might add that there was considerable difficulty in getting even this reference to minorities into the Helsinki Act, and the opposition did not come only from the Eastern states.

Within the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, a Working Group has been established and requested "to consider the drafting of a declaration on the rights of