

*Bibles*

maintain employment because he is a Baptist preacher. Because he is now unemployed, he is considered a vagabond and therefore punished and fined for not having a job. It is the catch 22 situation in Russia. You cannot propagate or express your faith. If you do, you lose your job. If you lose your job, you are punished even more for being a burden to the state.

In addition to the children, those who suffer most are the people on pension. These people earned a pension during their hard-working years. If they are found and convicted of participating in religious worship, they are fined 50 per cent of their pension. This is in a country that has signed the Helsinki agreement and supposedly is allowing for free access to scriptures. I think of the experience of a man called Brother Andrew. He has been dubbed "God's smuggler". He has made it his mission in life to smuggle bibles into that country. If the Russians allow freedom of worship, how can one man make it his mission in life to smuggle Bibles into that country? How can that be if there is free access to the scriptures?

The Mennonite Central Committee formed a delegation two years ago to meet with Russian officials. They asked to be allowed to import 10,000 Bibles into Russia. Some time later they were given permission to import 10,000 hymn books. That is something, I am glad for that, but it is strange that the request was sidetracked in that way.

The Russian government has adopted a means of isolating believing Christians by using the term unorganized or unrecognized churches. That is their euphemism for labelling or dealing with people whom they consider to be dissidents because they want to worship God in the way they have chosen as a result of the commitment they have made to the person of Jesus Christ.

Two years from now we will have the Olympics in the city of Moscow. I am sure it will be an extravaganza par excellence. The government of the U.S.S.R. will want to have thousands of tourists present on those days to see the Olympics and the accomplishments they have made in a material sense. Tourists will come from around the world to see the Olympics and other parts of their country. I wonder what it will be like for tourists who want to bring more than one Bible into the country. How much will they be frisked? How much freedom will they be given to travel around that country and visit their fellow Christians, their brothers and sisters? Will they be allowed free access to little groups who worship around the country or will they be hassled and harassed as they come to the border? If they have ten, 20 or 30 bibles, will they be confiscated?

I speak on this motion because I am concerned for those of my brothers and sisters in Russia who do not have the freedoms that we enjoy here. They hunger for the kind of fellowship that ought to be theirs and was promised to them under the constitution that was passed by their government.

I commend the hon. member for Fraser Valley West for bringing this issue before us and the hon. member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia) for updating it and pointing out that we will have another day of scrutiny in 1980. After the 1980 Olympics, we will have an opportunity to examine the record

established by the government of the U.S.S.R. in relation to all of the countries that are signatories to the Helsinki agreement. I urge hon. members to make it a personal responsibility to examine what is going on in that country in relation to Christian and Jewish believers in particular, who are suffering for their faith. I urge them to do their own research and at the 1980 conference in Madrid bring the question before the Russian delegation to make sure they give a proper accounting of their mandate to live up to the Helsinki agreement.

● (1742)

I should like to close by referring to one of the resolutions presented at the Twelfth Ukrainian Congress held in Winnipeg in October, 1977. It points out that the U.S.S.R. forbids the Ukrainian clergy and lay people from sending bibles and other religious publications to their co-religionists in the Ukraine either by mail or by personal delivery, and concludes by expressing the desire that there should be freedom of worship and freedom of access to the scriptures.

**Mr. J. Larry Condon (Middlesex-London-Lambton):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to compliment the hon. member for Fraser Valley West (Mr. Wenman). The issue he raises is one of great concern to us in Canada; it comes sharply into focus when we hear from other parts of the world about limitations upon human freedom which, fortunately, are outside our own experience.

The motion before us, in effect, seeks guarantees from the government of the U.S.S.R. through the forum of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe that bibles and religious publications will be able to enter the Soviet Union without hindrance. In view of reports received about difficulties experienced by some who have tried to take or send such material into the Soviet Union, the objective of the motion is certainly understandable and deserves our sympathy. Indeed, it is completely consistent with the basic aims of the Helsinki Final Act.

That document, among other things, tries to promote freedom of religion and the freer flow of information and ideas. The Final Act, however, is not an agreement in the sense of an international treaty with legally binding obligations which, if not adhered to, may be considered as violated. It is simply a declaration of intentions or guidelines for future action by governments. There are no deadlines by which it must be implemented nor any hard and fast rules on how it is to be implemented. It is by its very nature a long-term process and one should be under no illusions about the obstacles that lie in the way of its full implementation. We cannot, in other words, insist that the U.S.S.R. give the kind of guarantees the motion before us suggests.

Having said that, I have to add that human rights are a matter of concern to Canadians, particularly freedom of conscience and belief which are fundamental rights. Where these are not permitted to exist or are hindered, it is difficult to see how the process of increasing confidence and overcoming mistrust which are at the heart of détente can be promoted. Whether certain governments like it or not, therefore, human