

The Future of Canada: *A Bahá'í Perspective*

A Brief
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and Development Prospects of Canada

by
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I

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The middle years of the nineteenth century witnessed the virtually simultaneous births of a new nation and a new religion. The new nation was Canada and the new religion the Bahá'í Faith. For Canadian Bahá'ís, the pattern of coincidence that marks the outstanding dates of these two historical processes¹ now seems something of a portent: to a remarkable extent, the Canadian nation has come to exemplify those ideals which the Bahá'í Faith holds to be the distinguishing characteristics of a sane and enlightened society. That Canada's Parliament should have been the first sovereign legislature to recognize the institutions of our Faith by a formal Act (in 1949) is another token of this relationship, and one which Canadian Bahá'ís greatly treasure. It is this consonance of moral aims, more than any other factor, which has moved us to share a number of reflections with the Royal Commission on the Economic Union and Development Prospects of Canada.

Over a hundred years ago, Bahá'u'lláh, the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith, declared that our world was entering upon the age of its maturity, an age which will witness the establishment of a global society, the culminating stage in the long process of the unification of mankind:

“That one indeed is a man who, today, dedicateth himself to the service of the entire human race....The earth is but one country and mankind its citizens.” “This is the Day in which God's most excellent favours have been poured out upon men, the Day in which His most mighty grace hath been infused into all created things....Soon will the present order be rolled up, and a new one spread out in its stead.”²

The Bahá'í Faith does not see the process of the unification of mankind, a process which has inexorably gathered momentum since the above words were written over a century ago, as conflicting with any essential loyalties nor as stifling patriotism.³ Much less does it represent any threat to the survival of the cultural and linguistic diversity of the human race. On the contrary, we believe that only the institutions of a global society can truly protect these human resources. Unity in diversity has been and, we believe, will continue to be the organizing principle of social evolution.

II

Canada: A Bahá'í View

Canada's role in this process seems to us a pre-eminently creative one. There is not today on earth another human society which has made a more intelligent and successful effort to balance the domestic concerns of a diverse population with an appropriate response to the integrating currents of modern history. Such achievements as the enviable reputation which Canada has gradually won throughout the world or the remarkable national consensus by which a major constitutional revision has been recently carried through are examples that spring immediately to mind. We want to refer to a number of such features of Canadian development at a later point in this submission; it seems appropriate to mention here a striking illustration from our own recent experience.

Our Experience of Canada

As most Canadians are aware, members of our Faith are currently undergoing severe persecution in Iran.⁴ In this painful and difficult situation we have been grateful for the help given to us by the community of nations, by the world's media and by many human rights groups. While the results fall far short of halting the persecution, there is no question that, without such intervention, a tragedy of appalling dimensions would by now have occurred in Iran.

Canada has stood in the forefront of this humanitarian response. Further, because of the great respect which this country enjoys, its example of moral leadership has been a major factor in encouraging a wide diversity of other nations, including states in the Third World, to lend their weight to the general effort. The Commission may be interested to know, for example, that:

1. Canada's Parliament was the first legislature in the world (July 1980) to condemn the persecution of the Iranian Bahá'ís, an example which has since been followed by many other States.
2. Parliament was also the first legislature in the world to follow this action up with a second unanimous resolution (June 1981), drawing the situation to the attention of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.
3. Two successive Canadian governments, acting through the Department of External Affairs, have taken a leading role in mobilizing international intervention, despite the handicap of Canada's not having full diplomatic relations with Iran.⁵
4. Canada is far ahead of any other nation in the generous arrangements it has made to create a refuge in this country for Iranian Bahá'ís made homeless by the persecutions.⁶

We have been particularly impressed by the spirit in which this aid has been given. The agencies involved have shown an ability to balance a concern for Canada's national interests with a genuine expression of solidarity with fellow human beings from a different culture, in a distant part of the world. This spirit has manifested itself in the contacts we have had with individuals throughout government service, from Members of Parliament, through senior civil servants, to immigration counsellors in Canadian embassies overseas. It has characterized also the contacts we have had with agencies which became peripherally involved, ranging from the Passport Office to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

The Character of Canadian Society

Apart from the gratitude which this response has inspired in Bahá'ís everywhere, we believe that such actions reveal a great deal about the character of the nation which takes them. The Bahá'í community does not enjoy any advantage which would explain such concern for its welfare on political or material grounds. It has no powerful patrons, whether here or elsewhere; it does not engage in political agitation as a means of attaining its ends; nor does it have at its disposal the material means to influence any important segment of the media that might be susceptible to such influence. Its numbers are far larger in many other lands than is yet the case in this country. The assistance given to our community by Canada clearly represents the spontaneous expression of a pattern of cultural attitudes which has gradually matured here, together with a sense of confidence in the nation's moral and material resources. Bahá'ís are only one of many groups which have had cause to acknowledge with gratitude this national character.

That Canada should have developed moral capacities commensurate with the great material advantages it enjoys is a phenomenon which Bahá'ís the world over have been encouraged to anticipate. The bedrock of our confidence in the future of this country is a number of explicit references to Canada's destiny contained in the Scriptures of our Faith. Two of these passages have such striking relevance to the work of this Commission that we are moved to share them with you:

“...the future of the Dominion of Canada is very great, and the events connected with it infinitely glorious. The eye of God's loving kindness will be turned towards it, and it shall become the manifestation of the favours of the All-glorious....Again, I repeat, that the future of Canada, whether from a material or a spiritual standpoint, is very great. Day by day civilization and freedom shall increase.”⁷

The First Step in Mobilizing Canadian Resources

To Bahá'ís, the emergence in this country of a society which genuinely seeks to treat with justice the concerns of its many component elements, which deliberately encourages the life of the mind, which has demonstrated its willingness to cooperate with the forces of integration on the world scene – and which has been willing to make sacrifices for all of these values – is a sign of this divine promise. It is an evidence, too, of the immense potentialities conferred on this favoured land by Providence and of the capacity of the Canadian people to tap them. One need not share a belief in the Bahá'í revelation to share this conviction of Canada's future greatness. The objective evidence is too compelling for any serious and detached observer to deny. It seems to us, therefore, that the first challenge facing Canada's leadership is to marshal this evidence, to make explicit the message in it, and thus to awaken the conviction of our country's immense future that is latent in the minds and hearts of all Canadians. To the extent and at the speed that this is done, the problems ahead will more readily yield themselves to the solutions that the available expertise can devise.

A leading Canadian historian has summed up the formation of our country, with characteristic Canadian concern to avoid hyperbole:

“No popular patriotism brought forth the new creation, no revolutionary fervour. The life of the new Dominion was at first as drab, as empty and devoid of great ideals as had been that of the struggling provinces. Only the eye of faith...kept it together. Only by tediously slow degrees did the loyalty and love of its inhabitants show indications of centring on it.”⁸

There is general agreement that Canadians’ love and loyalty are now so centred and that great ideals can likewise find a home here.

III

The Direction of Historical Change

The Canadian Bahá’í Community is a religious organization, a body which exists to explore and teach a Faith. While the principles of this Faith place great emphasis on the application of the scientific method to all phenomena, we see the contribution which we can make to the national discussion this Commission on Canada’s future is conducting as a spiritual one.

In our opinion, moral and ethical standards, derived from spiritual sources, are the essential foundation of the successful organization of society. We use the term spiritual in its broadest sense as referring to the characteristics of the rational soul which, together with a certain genetic endowment, constitutes the individual human being and determines the extent to which social relationships are healthy and productive.⁹ Such spiritual attributes as faith, courage, a sense of excellence, a willingness to sacrifice, determination, integrity, a capacity for cooperation and a desire for unity are the real springs of human development. It is our conviction that a vision must lie at the heart of realistic economic and political planning which is spiritual in the sense we have used the term. For Bahá’ís, this vision is not only explicit, in the Scriptures of our Faith, but implicit in the experience of mankind, certainly of Canada, over the past several decades. One aim of this Brief is to suggest what we believe are some of its principal features.

Before doing so, we should clarify an important point. In speaking of the goals of world unity and international order, we do not intend to imply a belief on our part that these are matters of human choice. The essence of the message of Bahá’u’lláh is that the will of God has, in this age, set in motion forces which are impelling mankind, irresistibly, along the final course of its unification. These forces, He asserts, will dissolve whatever barriers may be interposed in their path, whether such interventions represent inert traditions or artifices devised to serve particular interests. Indeed, the process of dissolution itself releases the spiritual energies which are fueling the vast array of social experiments that characterize our age. Again, we feel that the evidence of man’s contemporary experience is sufficient to justify belief in the direction and inevitability of the process, whatever our religious or ideological leanings as individuals may be.

The Basis for Intelligent Planning

If this is true, then intelligent planning for the future must, in the final analysis, be based upon it, whatever the benefits promised by short-term expedients. To do otherwise would be to handicap our nation's capacity to respond to the challenges of an immediate future which is highly unpredictable and to take advantage of opportunities in the way that Canada, to an unusual degree, has so far been led to do. At the same time, all of our experience endorses the view that, to the extent that the nature of changes is under our control, these should be evolutionary in character.

What we are saying, therefore, is that Bahá'ís see all the nations on earth as caught up in an historical and God-determined process which is welding them into a single international order, whatever contrary opinions or desires significant segments of mankind may presently hold. Canada, as a result of a combination of circumstances, not the least of which is a series of unusually sound national choices in the past, is far better equipped than most of her sister nations to pass through this testing time strengthened and enriched as a society. To do so, however, we will have to begin by acknowledging the nature and inescapability of the challenge. Only in this way will we be able to identify and maintain our focus on those moral and spiritual principles which lie at the heart of evolutionary social change. This, in turn, we see as the prerequisite to making healthy and intelligent choices in the extraordinarily difficult days which lie immediately ahead for all mankind.

IV

The Major Obstacle in our Path

The views expressed in the foregoing will not be everywhere greeted with approbation. To the extent that differences of opinion on these great issues are the result of inadequate consultation, they will no doubt be gradually resolved through the kind of public discussion which the hearings of this Commission represent. We do not believe, however, that the only reason for opposition to the foregoing interpretation of mankind's present situation is that the issues have not been examined with sufficient thoroughness and rigour. There is a major obstacle in the path of all attempts to understand and respond to the needs of our age, an obstacle which will not yield to rational discussion because it is essentially irrational. Unless we are aware of the existence of this obstacle, and sensitive to the wide array of modes in which it exerts its influence in present-day civilization, we will find all efforts at planning constantly hobbled and not infrequently aborted.

This obstacle is the dogmatic materialism which is the dominant system of thought in our age. Whether enshrined in a brutal and self-righteous political ideology in one part of the world, or implicitly worshipped as the fountainhead of real human happiness in our own, the belief that man is essentially the product of his material nature has spread virtually unchecked throughout the world. It is nonchalantly assumed in popular forms of communication and discussion, commands something approaching reverence on university campuses, and, unexamined, underlies much of our analysis of economic problems and our approach to planning policy and relationships in the economic community.

That such a philosophy of life should attempt to justify itself in rational terms seems little short of grotesque. Whatever degree of social disorder can still be provoked by sectarian hatreds and racial prejudice, it is clear that we owe to the prevailing spirit of materialistic competition in our age two appalling global wars and an unending series of economic convulsions which have spread suffering and loss. We have the benefit around us of examples of societies which, decades ago, surrendered themselves deliberately to an exclusively materialistic interpretation of human history. We know that the dogmas of materialism contradict the wisdom of the ages, the insights of so-called underdeveloped peoples everywhere and the fruits of the most advanced studies which our own world has made into the nature of man. Clearly, modern man is materialistic not because he has any objective cause to be so or because reason suggests this as a philosophical ideal, but chiefly because of factors which have nothing to do with reasoned experience. In a sense, materialism is its own justification. It flourishes because one aspect of man is indeed material in nature and because the integrating processes of our age have temporarily broken down institutions which once served other and more important dimensions of the rational soul.

Building on Canada's Experience

We do not raise this issue here in order to propose a quixotic tournament against materialism. An evil so powerful, so pervasive and so practised as the system of attitudes that dominates our world must obviously run its course. Mankind will know how to deal with it when we have fully experienced its consequences. We mention the subject here because, as we say, we believe that materialism is the principal source of opposition to efforts at long-term social construction.

In a society like Canada, we can assume that this opposition will express itself not chiefly in ideological terms, but in a wide array of practical objections to policies and programs that reflect a spiritual and universal approach to the future. But this has been Canada's experience from the beginning. There is virtually nothing that we have ever done in this country, from surviving the American revolution, to building a transcontinental nation, to creating a multicultural society, which we have not been told was entirely impossible - was against all "reason" and "natural tendencies". We would not have built railroads, adopted a program of medical care for our population, nor even attempted to maintain the two languages which represent so great a national advantage, had we listened exclusively to the prevailing philosophy of our times. We can confidently expect that this opposition to spiritual and universal goals will continue to express itself in an inexhaustible range of proposals which, however well-meaning many of their proponents may be and whatever short-term merit they may have, will not serve the long-term interests of the Canadian people. That there will be expedients which will have value as holding-actions we do not deny; our concern is that the latter type of decision should be consciously taken as a means of providing greater flexibility and freedom in making sound long-term choices.

V

Some Considerations in Economic Planning

Most thoughtful people will agree that economics, as the study of the flow of goods and services, must be informed by a concept of human well-being which goes far beyond the most sophisticated analysis of inputs and outputs, if it is to be of real use. The economy is a complex social contract that must be studied with a view of determining how it can best serve human needs. Happily, measures of the quality of human life are now becoming an integral part of the discussion of economic growth and development. Scales of well-being are under development, which reflect such things as preservation of the quality of our environment, the proper management of our precious agricultural and forested lands, and the level of citizens' access to employment opportunities, education and health care. This trend represents a reaction to the tyranny which economic measures came to enjoy in public discussion not so long ago, when measures and dollar indices largely pre-empted consideration of the larger question of the welfare of the nation and its citizens.

More recently, analysis has begun to reveal large areas of valuable economic activity undetected by formerly sacrosanct economic indicators. These activities, unaccounted for in the Gross National Product and outside the monetary system, include the important work of mothers in family rearing and housework, and growing efforts towards self-sufficiency in such areas as food production, crafts, home and car repair, and volunteer community work. Inherently difficult to measure, these aspects of a nation's meeting of its needs may well grow as the information society develops, and leisure time becomes devoted to creative work in supplying what is otherwise prohibitively expensive.

It seems not irrelevant to add that what has been measured in the past as wealth has often been its inverse. As Ralph Nader has flippantly noted: "Every automobile accident increases the nation's GNP". One thinks, in this connection, of the social costs and the financial burdens to publicly funded health care and other government compensatory schemes of such contributions to the Gross National Product as the increased consumption of alcohol or drugs, and planned obsolescence. The subject has attracted growing attention from economic thinkers such as W.W. Rostow, Robert L. Heilbroner, E.F. Schumacher, and Kenneth Boulding.¹⁰ We note the view of the latter, for example, that "further inquiry into the nature of productivity increases demands for a more adequate theory of production than the one economics has provided for the last two hundred years." Economic historians of a more technical bent, like Mancur Olson and Douglas C. North, have similarly commented on some of the difficulties inherent in present economic models. Olson, for example, described as a "sclerosis" the condition which eventually characterizes stable, free market economies when special coalitions proliferate and unresolvable struggles over the distribution of the economic pie ensue.¹¹

Faith, Morality and Economic Performance

More importantly, economic performance, even if measures of performance are expanded to account for more than has traditionally been included, must be understood as dependent on questions of morality and belief. As North points out, economic change results not only from changing relative prices, but because of changing ideological perspectives that lead individuals and groups to urge structural changes.¹² His views are echoed by many of his colleagues. Heilbroner believes that "the crisis (of the seventies) was not one of

present reality but of expected developments, not one of economics alone but of belief.” Michio Morishima, among others, says that analysis of Japan’s economic success has not been able to factor out business, economic and management processes from cultural and spiritual orientations.¹³ Barbara Ward’s studies have persuaded her of “the importance of connecting economic development with human values and cultures as they are expressed in each country”.¹⁴

Even the popular debate between those who espouse a greater measure of free enterprise and those who advocate increased state intervention is, if we look closely at the rhetoric, appealing to our sense of the importance of fundamental values and spiritual qualities. Individual expression, imagination, the entrepreneurial spirit, devotion to hard work, appeals for a just return on investment - these are not purely materialistic goods. Nor are reference to social harmony and justice, to care for the less fortunate, to building in equity of access to opportunity, to cooperation and to social solidarity. On both sides, often unknowingly, these spiritual values are the sources from which Canadians draw inspiration and motivation. Economic discussions can quickly collapse into a debate quite at odds with any mature spiritual and ethical framework when interpretation focuses on products rather than on processes, and when they limit themselves to technological terms, ignoring the creativity to which technological achievement testifies.

What we are saying, and what we believe is supported by the thinking of a growing body of economists, is that the tissue of economic life is spun from cultural and spiritual values and from intellectual energy, imagination and confidence, quite as much as it is from material goods and services. This economic tissue is held together by patterns of information and exchange, as well as a wide variety of other relationships, all of which derive their strength from trust in principles of justice which are assumed to lie at the heart of the social contract. It seems to us essential that these underlying realities of economic life be addressed explicitly in all our planning. We should seek, progressively, to set goals which are realistic in their recognition of all the dimensions of human nature and society, and devise programs and agencies which are far more able to capitalize on them than has so far been the case.

Planning in a Global Context

Two decades ago, in a series of essays which won well-merited acclaim, a Canadian scholar said:

“In the world of today, when whole groups of so-called sovereign states are experimenting with rational forms of integration, the exercise of sovereignty will not only be divided within federal states; it will have to be further divided between the states and the communities of states. If this tendency is accentuated the very idea of national sovereignty will recede and, with it, the need for an emotional justification such as nationalism.”¹⁵

In the period since these words were written, the perception they embody has become the most widely discussed subject of our time among thoughtful people. It has provided the impulse for six special reports commissioned by the Club of Rome, each analyzing a different group of problems and opportunities which this global process has created. Most recently, the enormously important study produced by the Brandt Commission has mobilized the evidence which supports the widespread conclusion being reached in many circles that “real progress can be made nationally only if it is assured globally.”¹⁶ A host of social commentators like Alvin Toffler, Marilyn Ferguson, Fritjof Capra, Hazel Henderson and John Naisbitt have made certain that the message and its implications have been communicated to the literate public.¹⁷

The Earth as One Economy

The consensus of all these researchers is, in Bahá'í terms, that "the earth is but one country and mankind its citizens". There is, throughout these studies, a conviction that the only way in which a rapidly evolving technology can be harnessed to serve man's best nature is if it serves the entire human race. Further, there is an impatience with outworn political and economic structures which exclusively serve national and other vested interests. The inter-dependence of the nations of the northern and southern hemispheres has been increasingly emphasized as an economic relationship which is vital to the well-being of both groups, and the Brandt Commission has warned that no improvement in the situation existing in the Third World can occur "so long as the industrialized countries stick to a guiding philosophy which is predominantly materialistic and based on a belief in the automatic growth of the gross national product and of what they regard as living standards."¹⁸

To imagine that the concentration of economic and military power can assure the survival, let alone the development of any society at this point in the twentieth century is to follow a chimera. It is clear that the human race is entering upon the most dangerous period in its entire history. However vast the resources which a small minority of States may succeed in amassing, destructive power of such a range is falling into the hands of enough irresponsible elements in the human family that there is no form of national security that can protect a people from the fate of the world. The very insistence of growing masses of people to participate in their own affairs, an insistence potentially so creative, has become a threat against which no State on earth has been able to erect a lasting shield.

VI

A Canadian Opportunity

Without in any way minimizing the difficult choices ahead, we believe, as we have said, that Canada is far better equipped than most other nations to cope with the challenges of the future. The care, and often the courage, with which we have sought to maintain our own integrity within defensive alliances which we regard as both moral commitments and intelligent provisions has not gone unappreciated in other parts of the world. Although we are still lamentably short of the minimal level of foreign aid which is incumbent on a nation of our resources, the policy of giving that aid free of political conditions has won us great respect. The leading role we have sought to play in maintaining the dialogue between North and South; our human rights record, both at home and abroad; the major investment which we have made in the United Nations and its agencies; even the instinctive withdrawal, in an earlier age, from the proposal that we assume overseas colonies, a proposal in which most of those nations closest to us in political tradition saw no objection: all these and countless other Canadian responses have, year by year, like the incremental buildup of an ocean reef, laid the foundations of trust and even affection in the hearts of a great many of the peoples who share this planet with us. We Bahá'ís, who are members of an international community representing most of mankind's cultural and racial diversity, assure you that these foundations exist. They seem to us among the most precious of Canada's national endowments and fully capable of bearing the weight of the next stage in the system of relationships we need to build with the rest of mankind.

Societal Learning

No aspect of this building program is so important as what the Club of Rome has called “societal learning”. Canadians as a people must be fully and deliberately informed, not only of our country’s need to relate to the rest of mankind, but of the impressive record it has already marked up in this respect. It is probably safe to say that most Canadians are dimly aware of this record. It is likely that most would attach a positive value to the achievements involved. In an age when the principal media of public communication, particularly those centred in the United States, continue to focus the interpretation of international events through the prism of an unquestioned national sovereignty, however, it has been extremely difficult for Canadians to properly appreciate the great advances which their country has made in those areas of human choice which will be vital to the well-being of future generations. This, however, becomes more easy of achievement as nationalism, everywhere, loses both its credibility and its appeal. The growing vacuum which disillusionment with the pretensions of nationalism is creating seems to us to represent an invaluable opportunity. Is there not a challenge to Canada’s leaders to seek deliberately to induce what has been termed in some of the popular literature on the subject a “paradigm shift” in which Canadians may at last find the identity which has so long (and perhaps fortunately) eluded us? Distinguished scholars like Marshal McLuhan and Northrop Frye have long been urging Canadians to adopt a new vision appropriate to the future. Some such shift is occurring in any event; with the leadership of our nation rests the choice of how creative a change it will be, politically, socially, and economically.

To Sum Up

The foregoing comments have outlined what Bahá’ís believe is the direction of modern history, and have suggested two major Canadian reference points for the future: a recognition of the spiritual dimensions of human life in social planning and an orientation toward Canada’s integration in a global economy. As we indicated at an earlier point in this Brief, the Bahá’í community does not see itself as being in a position to advance political or economic proposals, although, as we will note at a later point in this presentation, we would welcome an opportunity to comment more specifically on current educational needs. What we feel impelled to do is to identify some of those principles, values and standards which are safe guideposts for national planning. All have their source in what we believe to be the revelation of God to our age, and the century or more since they were enunciated has provided considerable experience in the application of most of them, on the part of the international community which has slowly taken shape around them. Most of these same ideals have emerged, to one extent or another, however, in the thinking of many other groups, as a result of the profound changes which all human societies have undergone in recent decades. They are what we assume Aurelio Peccei intended in his presidential address to this year’s meeting of the Club of Rome, in Budapest:

“Thanks to the extraordinarily great progress made by our techno-scientific and industrial capacity, we have accumulated the elements and forged the instruments of fantastic power; yet we have not acquired a clear vision and comprehension of how much all this progress has enhanced our position and enlarged our responsibilities on earth...

“We must therefore construct a philosophy of life adapted to our times, building it around ‘pillars of wisdom’ which necessarily must be consistent with the character and imperatives of this age.”¹⁹

In what follows, therefore, we want to limit ourselves to identifying such pillars of wisdom, principles which have already been strongly endorsed by experience during the past hundred years.

VII

Some General Principles

Balance

A quality which has characterized Canadian social organization, which is highly prized in the teachings of our own Faith, and which is germane to most of the remarks which follow is the sense of balance. The spirit of compromise, so often and so easily derided, has been the leitmotif of Canadian political thinking. Canada has been blessed that this political tendency has been combined with an extraordinarily high level of integrity in public life, an endowment which has resulted, not merely from British political institutions, but even more from the Judaeo-Christian religious tradition whose insights and precepts have been woven throughout the daily life of Canadians. This combination of a willingness to take into account diverse interests and views, with a concern for righteousness that has been far more humble than it is generally credited with being, has acted to produce the sense of balance that marks so much of Canadian public endeavour. Whatever pressures immediate circumstances may exert, the struggle constantly to maintain an equipoise among the wide variety of interests in Canadian society must, we believe, remain one of the unchanging reference points against which all political and economic proposals are evaluated.

Cooperation

One of the inevitable effects of the accelerating breakdown of the existing system of relationships in the world is the growing emphasis being laid on competition and self-preservation. Significant segments of public opinion, both in Canada and abroad, are suffering a crisis of confidence in the spirit of cooperation with which societies have sought to tackle problems since World War II. While these fears no doubt have considerable short term and particular justification, they are no reliable guide to the fostering of the long-term interests of any society on earth. The spirit of competition in the contemporary world assumes, as we have said, the continuing existence of concentrations of power whose growing vulnerability no detached observer can fail to note. Worse, to the extent that this spirit is allowed to become the dominant characteristic of the behaviour of any society or any segment of a society, its effects will seriously undermine relationships which, in the twenty-first century, will be vital to that society's well-being. As we say, we believe that Canada has painstakingly built up a system of moral strengths which will prove to be an incalculable asset in the world that will emerge from the crisis of the twentieth century and a precious legacy for our grandchildren. Canada has made an enviable start in learning the difficult paths of cooperation, and, whatever short-term adjustments may be necessary, we would be foolish indeed to be led into bartering away this advantage for short-term objectives.

Consultation

We are told, on all sides, that our parliamentary system is anachronistic and incapable of responding to the challenges of the future. No one would deny that there is a good deal of merit in these criticisms: the institutions themselves were conceived for the needs of a very different age than that in which we now live. What is important is that Canada has deliberately moved to develop a supplementary system of ad hoc

arrangements which are capable of functioning in a consultative, rather than an adversary mode. The present hearings are an instance of this program, if it can be so termed, and the results of the recent constitutional process a particularly impressive example of what can be achieved. Efforts to restructure parliamentary institutions, therefore, seem to us a secondary concern. Indeed, since the principal shortcomings of these institutions seems to us to lie in the party system they enshrine, and since there is little or no likelihood that this can be significantly altered (nor even that it would necessarily be wise at this stage to attempt to alter it²⁰) we believe that national energies would be most profitably expended in expanding and systematizing the experiments in consultation now underway.²¹

We mention the consultative principle, particularly, because it lies at the heart of the functioning of our own Faith. Bahá'u'lláh declared that, together, consultation and compassion form the “law” of the age of mankind’s maturity. Our experiments with His guidance on consultation in the administration of an international community which, as we say, is extraordinarily varied, have proven so fruitful that we are moved to summarize here a few of the guiding principles.²²

1. Freedom and opportunity for all those affected by a decision to participate in the consultative process.
2. A clear distinction between this broad consultation and the deliberations of the democratically elected body which must take the responsibility for the decision.
3. Encouragement for every individual engaged in consultation to “freely set forth his conscience”.
4. The prohibition of any form of factionalism.
5. The responsibility of all those participating to exercise courtesy and moderation.
6. The moral obligation of each individual in a consultative process to detach himself from his own contribution, which, once it has been made, becomes a common possession.
7. The requirement that, once a decision is taken, the majority favouring and those originally in opposition must unite in a whole-hearted and united effort to carry it out.
8. The obligation of decision-making bodies to constantly evaluate their work and, where necessary, revise their decisions.

Economic Justice

Justice, Bahá'u'lláh declared a century ago, is “the best beloved of all things” in the sight of God and represents God’s freely given “gift” to man in this, the age of his maturity. In the intervening decades, it has become the test to which the peoples of the world now insist upon submitting any proposal for social and economic change. Those societies will succeed, we believe, which are best organized to serve as vehicles of this divine gift.

The Commission will no doubt receive a wide range of specific proposals, from groups in the Canadian population, for the equitable resolution of various current problems. We believe that a primary economic concern of government must be to encourage a much higher level of trust and cooperation in the partnership between capital and labour, which lies at the base of the material well-being of this country. The Bahá'í Writings envision a future in which experimentation with various combinations of public and private ownership will be a continuing and healthy characteristic of economic life. At the same time, they suggest

profit-sharing in both industry and commerce, as a potential source of great social motivation. We urge that government consider ways in which this form of economic organization, which appears to be contributing significantly to the high level of productivity enjoyed by several other industrial nations, can be actively cultivated here. We are not suggesting interference with the freedom of corporations and unions to conduct their own affairs, under the law, in whatever ways seem best to them. Rather, it seems to us that a policy of offering tax and other incentives to companies which organize their affairs so as to permit participation by workers in the profits of the undertaking and to share in the decision-making process, is a means which is not only within the government's competence, but fully consistent with Canadian traditions.

Beyond questions of economic structure, it seems to us unarguable that the attention which has been given to the needs and opportunities of certain segments of Canada's population has been extremely important in generating economic motivation. There are four such areas which, we believe, will greatly reward substantially increased attention of this kind:

(a) *Agriculture*

Those writings of our Faith which touch on economic questions place particular emphasis on the role of "primary producers," farmers, fishermen and others, involved in the task of feeding the human race. Studies such as those undertaken by the Club of Rome indicate the need for greatly increased assistance and support for this sector of the world's economy. While Canada does not have a shortage of food which causes such concern in other parts of the world, there is a widespread feeling on the part of Canadian farmers that their position in the economy is being eroded. Since our physical survival depends on the efficiency and skills of our farmers, we believe that the current expressions of distress represent a warning signal from the economic foundations of our society which should receive our government's careful attention. Moreover, we have the moral responsibility to do what we can to help other members of our global society feed themselves and we must take steps to determine how this can best be done. In striving to meet and surpass the minimal target for Third World aid, is it not possible to draw, to a far greater extent than we have so far done, on Canada's agricultural resources, specifically on the sons and daughters of farm families who represent the cutting edge of this economic tradition and many of whom are, for reasons beyond their own control, temporarily unable to use their skills in the domestic economy?

(b) *Canada's Native Population*

The native peoples of Canada represent a unique resource. Their survival amongst us, in the face of heartbreaking discouragements faced by few other people on earth, and their retention of so much of their spiritual strengths, endow Canada with a body of citizens who are potentially capable of playing a key role in the strengthening of the nation's economic and cultural ties with the rest of mankind. The movement to arrive at a just settlement of their claims, if it is persisted in, will not merely remove a long-standing cause of alienation, but can become a first step in a deliberate program to release this potential. Among prophecies about the civilization of man's future contained in our Scriptures, one related to the specific destiny of the original inhabitants of this continent seems especially relevant to this inquiry. The passage states that they will eventually demonstrate capacity comparable to that of the tribes of the Arabian peninsula who, when the roots of motivation were tapped by the vision in the *Qur'an*, became the founders of some of mankind's most brilliant civilizations.²³ (It was, in fact a descendant of these same tribesmen, 'Ibn Khaldun, who was the first scholar ever to conceive the idea of doing what this Commission was created to undertake, namely, to take a human society as a phenomenon susceptible of scientific study.)²⁴ Sooner or later the nations of the western hemisphere will find the means to draw on this creativity. We believe that Canada is uniquely fitted to take the lead in doing so.

(c) *Women*

It is clear that the emerging global society is one in which women will have assumed an equal role with men in all fields of human endeavour, scientific, governmental, scholarly, and artistic, as well as social. The process is well advanced in most developed nations. Canadians can take pride in the dramatic progress which this country has made over the past 30 years and, particularly, in the response which we have given to the United Nations' Decade for Women now drawing to a close. In this brief period we have witnessed not only the elimination of virtually all discriminatory legislation against women in this country but also the establishment of the necessary structures, both governmental and non-governmental, to examine policies and programs in the light of their impact on women.

The longer-term challenge is to gradually break down, through education, the deeply-embedded prejudicial attitudes which prevent the full participation of women in all areas of society. Because this challenge is essentially spiritual and moral in nature, government can approach it only indirectly, but the contributions of government are, nonetheless, of vital importance. Incentives, both financial and social, can be provided to compensate those who make adjustments in patterns of hiring, employment term and benefits, and career advancement. Educators and educational institutions can be encouraged to counteract sex-stereotypes in the mental horizons of their young charges. Media and private enterprise can be held accountable to standards of justice which, as necessary, supersede personal profit or license of expression that passes for "freedom of speech". Our society has a particularly pressing obligation to move toward freeing women from the economic dependency which has so far been inseparable from their social role as mothers.

Finally, we believe that Canada can make an important contribution in assisting Third World nations to make significant progress in this field. Canada's outward-looking policies have earned this country a trusted reputation in many parts of the world. The Bahá'í community feels that it is of vital importance, both for Canada as a nation and for those whom Canada assists, to see that persistent practical effect is given to CIDA's view that women are "the key to control on population growth, to family health, productivity, improving the gross national product, and to liberation from ignorance".²⁵ It is a revealing commentary on the condition of our world that women, who are the most potent force for the internal reconstruction of society, constitute two-thirds of the world's seven hundred million illiterates. The Scriptures of the Bahá'í Faith urge that, since literacy in women becomes a permanent development, passed on to future generations, it should be given clear priority in all educational programs. Our hope, therefore, is that CIDA will steadily expand and strengthen its insistence on the integration of local women in all development projects funded by this country.

(d) *The Elderly*

Whatever age any one of us may presently have, there is no doubt that all of us who live long enough will grow old. To one extent or another, each of us is dimly aware of the fact and concerned about the implications. From the way in which a nation treats its elderly, all of the other members derive an impression of the moral nature of that society, which strongly influences their willingness to participate in it and sacrifice for it. This perception affects the national esprit de corps to a profound degree. Canada has moved steadily in the direction of attempting to create among Canadians that sense of family which the Writings of our own Faith say is a necessary quality of a healthy community. To plan in this way to further deepen the sense of security among elderly Canadians will require real sacrifices in the setting of national priorities, but we believe this is one of the chief ways of releasing the human resources upon which our progress depends. Objections that such provisions are impractical because of changing age ratios in Canadian society fail to recognize that intelligent and morally sound immigration policies can maintain whatever age balance national economic health requires. Here, as in so many other areas of concern, candid acceptance of our membership in the one human race seems to us to bear so directly on our domestic needs.

Educational Needs and Opportunities

A principle reiterated in many places in the teachings of our Faith is that of universal education. In this connection, the experience of the Bahá'í community in Iran is of interest. That community of some 300,000 persons, drawn from the same ethnic and social groups as the bulk of the population of that country, has succeeded in reaching a literacy level of more than 90% in the space of three generations. This stands in sharp contrast to Iran's national average which hovers somewhere under 40%. Although long prohibited by a screen of discriminatory legislation from accepting employment in many sectors of the economy, the community came in the 1960s and 70s to represent a pool of trained resources whose existence could not be ignored by a society plunged suddenly into the requirements of the twentieth century. Consequently, and most grudgingly, they were permitted to play a significant role in the service of their nation, particularly in fields where public trust was involved such as economic management, banking, health care and the various branches of engineering. Indeed, this very fact created much of the jealousy which today intensifies the fires of religious bigotry.²⁶

We mention this aspect of our experience because we feel that it points up two challenges which Canadian society, together with its counterparts in other parts of the Western world, is facing. There are large numbers of Canadians who are excluded from the gainful employment of their capacities, not because of religious prejudice, but because of rapid technological and market changes. No one would deny that these people represent the country's most valuable natural resource. In our view, one of the most important tasks of the leadership of our nation today is to develop a long-range national program for the re-training of Canadians. which will itself be capable of adaptation to take advantage of changing economic opportunities and requirements.

The second educational issue to which we believe our experience in Iran is germane is the training of Canada's children. The Iranian Bahá'ís were able to take such advantage of even the limited opportunities open to them, not merely because of their intellectual preparation but because of moral attitudes they had learned through childhood. It is our children who will have to give practical effect, in the twenty-first century, to the decisions arising out of this present inquiry. The only way in which they will be equipped to do so is if the overriding priorities in their education are to train them to think independently, to acquaint them with the moral dimensions of their own human nature, and to arouse in them the spirit of adventure and sacrifice which the building of a world society, alone, can inspire.²⁷

There is no other place where the prevailing dogmas of materialism pose so direct and impudent a challenge to our freedom and right to plan our society's future. Is there not a widespread feeling among Canadians of virtually every background that enormous damage is being done to the country's children and youth by the sedulous fostering, in the media especially, of attitudes which are antithetical to human nature and human happiness? Cannot a society which has freed education from the sectarian dogmas and political ideologies which still handicap so many other nations, meet this challenge? The Bahá'í community believes that the time has come for a searching nationwide inquiry into a situation which thoughtful Canadians consider as having reached crisis proportions. We refrain from elaborating on the subject here, out of a concern not to trespass on the terms of these hearings, but do want to indicate that this is an area of future inquiry in which the Bahá'í community would welcome an opportunity to participate. We are sure that many groups of concerned citizens would respond creatively, given that opportunity.

Municipal Government

An area in which Canadian concern for balance has been particularly obvious has been in the matter of giving appropriate weight to the principles of centralization and de-centralization. Today, we appear to have arrived, temporarily at least, at a balance between the Federal and Provincial interests, which satisfies a substantial majority of Canadians. Has the time not come for us to address, in a much more deliberate fashion, the equally important role of municipal government? As in the other sections of this Brief, we are responding primarily to the teachings of our own Faith, but these are so widely reflected in views being expressed in many sectors of Canadian society, that it seems appropriate to include a reference to them here.

The kind of society which Bahá'u'lláh envisions emerging from the upheaval of the present age is one in which local government will have a far greater role than it does in virtually any present-day State. The reasons are, no doubt, sufficiently obvious as to need no elaboration. It will be enough to note that, for society to adequately nurture the various aspects of its citizens' lives, and to create the necessary sense of family amongst groups of citizens, the level of government which is closest to man's day-to-day life must have at its disposal an adequate share of the material resources of that country. Is the distribution of resources and powers between the municipal and provincial levels of government here in Canada appropriate, for example, to the changing nature of our society? While we do not feel competent to comment on a subject which falls properly into the sphere of political action, we do believe that Canada will be greatly benefitted if the next phase of national consultation on the organization of Canadian society will pay specific attention to the relative position of its municipalities in the system of things.

Civil Authority

No one can fail to sympathize deeply with the anguish which the problems created by a disintegrating social order are creating for a growing number of human beings who feel helpless to protect themselves and their families. At such a time, public protest is an understandable feature of public discussion, and we believe that successive Canadian governments have been very far-sighted in not merely respecting the constitutional right to protest, but in lending various forms of practical assistance in certain instances where groups of citizens have wished to express strong disagreement with decisions. The recent adoption of the Charter of Rights can leave no Canadian in any doubt that he is adequately protected in law and that adequate channels exist through which he can contribute to the decision-making process in our society.

But citizens also have responsibilities. The most important of these, in a democratic society, is submission to the will of the majority, as expressed through the constitutional instruments which society has painstakingly created for that process. Governments have the right to expect civil obedience. Governments have the right to be wrong and still be supported in their decisions. No good, but only harm can result from the deliberate violation of civil law or deliberate disobedience to duly constituted agencies of civil authority. We believe that this is a principle which is endorsed by the vast majority of Canadians and one which is capable of evoking an impressive response from them. Since many of the decisions which lie ahead of us will entail real hardship, and will necessarily contain imperfections and inequities, it will be essential that government have the courage to take the public as fully as possible into its confidence and to challenge Canadians to act responsibly.

VIII

Continental and Regional Association

It is obvious that the unification of mankind is proceeding through a series of stages involving ever larger combinations of the component parts. The emergence of a series of national federations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Canada being one of the principal cases in point, has been one phase of the process. Another of these steadily widening circles is now emerging in the form of economic, technological, social and even loose “parliamentary” associations among groups of nations. It would be unrealistic for Canadians to imagine that our country can or should stand any more aloof from the current phase of the process of integration than it did from the preceding one. For every nation on earth, the road to the emerging global society runs via continental and regional commonwealths.

The area of choice open to us, therefore, is not whether we will participate in some more intimate economic association here on the North American continent, but rather the form and nature of the association. It does not seem to us helpful that these issues should be presented to Canadians, as is so often the case, as a choice between “Nationalism” and “Continentalism” (or between one of these two isms and “Internationalism”). Leadership in the field of social and economic planning must involve giving some attention to the task of assisting Canadians to understand the total process of global integration and to orient themselves intelligently to its various imperatives.

We do not minimize the extremely difficult choices which this challenge represents for our country. Canada has so long been used to defining itself in terms of its relationship to the United States (is, indeed, regarded by some as having defined itself into existence in this manner) that the idea of a closer association with its much larger neighbour arouses the greatest trepidation and, in some quarters, even revulsion. There has been some historical cause for these feelings, and we are not in the fortunate position of Europeans who can look to various sub-associations within the continental economic community to cushion the impact of the emerging federation. The challenge, however, is inescapable; Canadians will be able to minimize the risks and derive the maximum benefits for this country to the extent that we understand the process.

An essential feature of such a public discussion, we believe, is a far more rational attitude toward the United States itself. It was not so long ago that English-speaking Protestant Canadians and French-speaking Catholic Canadians were engaged in elaborating demonologies in which the other culture was represented as the focus of dangers to the survival of the fruits of civilization in this country. Such views are a cause merely of embarrassment in most circles today, whatever traces they may have left in our domestic relations. Is not this same tendency at work in the contemporary wisdom that equates the United States with social pathology? Is there not, in fact, a widespread tendency in this country (as elsewhere) to confuse American culture with the materialistic spirit of the times? If so, and with questions of justice set entirely aside, this represents a serious handicap to our efforts to relate ourselves realistically to the opportunities of our situation. The United States which, willy-nilly, will constitute a leading member of the world federation of mankind's future, will be a totally different partner from the aggressive republic which invaded Canada twice within the first three decades of its existence, and which tends toward similar lapses in the economic field to the present day. Our overriding concern must be to make certain that, taken together, regional and continental agreements with other states contribute to, rather than interfere with, our integration in a global economy.

IX

Canada's Future

We come finally to a subject which we approach with some diffidence. From time immemorial, an intrinsic feature of the revelations of God has been that of prophetic insight. The foregoing remarks have touched on statements of this kind in the Scriptures of our Faith which relate specifically to the future of Canada and for which, as we say, there seems ample supporting evidence in contemporary experience. Beyond these, there are passages which bear so directly on the immediate future of mankind as a whole that we would not feel we were being faithful to our responsibility as an essentially religious body, if we were not to recognize their implications here for the rest of what we have been saying.

Over a century ago, Bahá'u'lláh warned that the accelerating course of social change on this planet would pass through periods of upheaval which He described as calamitous. Some of these He indicated were inescapable features of the process and others the consequence of failures of leadership on the part of mankind's major institutions. Most of these developments He saw as focused in the twentieth century, and He indicated that their climax, in the concluding years of the century, would entail disorder and suffering on a scale mankind had never before known. He warned, for example, that:

“Strange and astonishing things exist in the earth, but they are hidden from the minds and understanding of men. These things are capable of changing the whole atmosphere of the earth and their contamination would prove lethal.”

The time would come, Bahá'u'lláh said, when the misuse of these resources, together with unforeseen excesses produced by the prevailing materialism in the developed world, would call into question the very survival of civilization itself. He foresaw a period when “all eyes shall stare upward with terror,” when “the very limbs of mankind shall quake.”²⁸

These dangers now represent the growing perceptions of the mass of mankind and have begun to generate widespread anxiety. They need no reiteration here from religion in order to draw attention to them, nor do we mention them for that purpose. On the contrary, it seems clear that one of the greatest handicaps to sound planning for the future is the paralysis of thought and courage which a contemplation of the threat to our survival produces. We hope it is not inappropriate, therefore, if we conclude our presentation to this Commission with a reference to the cause of the optimism with which our own community faces the future. Mankind has, we believe, the promise of God that, however frightening and painful the experience and however sweeping the social dislocations, the human race will pass successfully through the approaching, final stage in the process which is welding us into a single human family. It is in this context that we see the extraordinary promises made about our own nation being realized.

We are grateful for the opportunity to contribute our views to the Commission's study. That a national forum concerned especially with the economy should be as ready to hear the comments of a religious community as to those of a business corporation or a labour union says a good deal in itself about the nature of our country. If we may sum up what we have said, it is that the kind of society which has painstakingly been built here in Canada represents the leading edge of social evolution, and that planning for the future should take the maximum advantage of the fact. It will require great vision for Canadians, being the kind of people that we are, to believe this about ourselves and great courage to act on the belief. The key to both, we think, and the greatest challenge facing the leaders of our country, is to accept wholeheartedly our membership in a struggling global community which desperately needs, and will generously repay, what we have been prepared by everything in Canadian history to give. An earlier generation of leaders was able to

do precisely this, in the smaller but equally demanding context of colonial society. A little over a hundred years ago, as the Bahá'í teachings were first being enunciated on the other side of the world, the long Confederation debate was moving to its climax here in British North America. A question asked by one of the leading exponents of the plan for a Canadian nation, during the course of a complex discussion of economic, social and constitutional concerns, seems equally relevant to the opportunity now facing us:

“Does this not lift us above the petty politics of the past, and present to us high purposes and great interests that may well call forth all the intellectual ability and all the energy and enterprise to be found amongst us?”²⁹

References

1. The Bahá'í Faith was founded in Iran by Bahá'u'lláh (b. 1817) and the Báb (b. 1819). The ministry of the latter, as herald of Bahá'u'lláh's mission, began in May, 1844. It reached its climax in 1848, shortly before the Báb's martyrdom at the instigation of the Shi'ih Muslim clergy, on July 9, 1850. The years between 1848 and 1853 were marked by widespread massacres incited by these same clerics, in which it is estimated that 20,000 followers of the new faith lost their lives. Bahá'u'lláh, whose mission began in 1853, first communicated its nature to His followers in April, 1863. His public announcement was made in July, 1867, on the eve of His banishment to the Turkish penal colony of Akka in the Holy Land. The period between 1867 and 1873 was devoted to the preparation and dispatch of a series of major messages to the then rulers of the world, outlining the nature of the global society whose formation He declared was the will of God and the culminating stage of social evolution on this planet. The next two decades saw the elaboration of a body of principles and institutions for the guidance of the international community which began in those years. Bahá'u'lláh died in 1892. His tomb at Bahji, outside Akka and that of the Báb on Mount Carmel, above Haifa, are the focal points of the complex of buildings and gardens which today form the Bahá'í World Centre.
2. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh* (Bahá'í, Wilmette, Ill., 2nd rev. ed., 1976).
3. Rabbani, Shoghi Effendi, *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh* (Bahá'í, Wilmette, Ill., 2nd rev. ed., 1974) pp. 41-42.
4. For a discussion of the current persecution see *The Bahá'is in Iran* (Bahá'í International Community, New York, updated July, 1982).
5. This intervention has taken place principally through the United Nations' Commission for Human Rights and its associated organs.
6. In 1981, the Department of Immigration signed an agreement with the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada permitting that body to sponsor the immigration of several hundred Iranian Bahá'ís. Iranian Bahá'ís were also named specifically by the Minister in his Dec. 1982 submission to the House on the 1983 quotas for Government sponsored refugees. To date, nearly a thousand Iranian Bahá'ís have arrived or are in process. The arrivals have settled in over 140 communities in all ten provinces and in the Yukon and Mackenzie Territories.
7. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan* (Bahá'í, Wilmette, Ill., rev. ed., 1977) pp. 85, 87.
8. Arthur R.M. Lower, *Colony to Nation* (Longmans Green, Toronto, 1953), p. 325.
9. For a discussion of the subject see William S. Hatcher, *The Bahá'í Concept of Spirituality: Bahá'í Studies Vol. 11* (Association for Bahá'í Studies, Ottawa, 1983).
10. See, for instance, Boulding, Kenneth E., "On Being Rich and Being Poor: Technology and Productivity" in *Appropriate Technology and Social Values* (Bellinger Publishing Co., Cambridge, Mass, 1980) pp. 193-205; Heilbroner, Robert L. (*Beyond Boom and Crash*, W.W. Norton, N.Y., 1978); Schumacher, E.F., *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered* (Harper and Row, N.S.: 1973); Rostow, W.W., *Getting From Here to There* (McGraw-Hill, N.Y., 1978.)
11. Olson, Mancur, *The Rise and Decline of Nations: Economic Growth, Stagflation, and Social Rigidities* (Yale University Press, Yale, 1982).
12. North, Douglas C., *Structure and Change in Economic History* (W.W. Norton, N.Y., 1981).
13. Morishima, Michio, *Why Has Japan Succeeded? Western Technology and the Japanese Ethos* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1982).
14. Waid, Barbara, "A Global Marshall Plan", *Dialogue for a New Order*, Haw Khadija (ed.) (Pergamon, N.Y., 1980), pp. 256-269.
15. Trudeau, Pierre Elliott, "Federalism, Nationalism and Reason", *Federalism and the French Canadians* (Macmillan, Toronto, 1968), pp. 195-195. Originally published in *Cite Libre*, May 1964; translation courtesy the *Montreal Star*.
16. Independent Commission on International Development Issues (popularly known as the "Brandt Commission"), *North-South: A Programme for Survival*, (The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass, 1980).
17. See, for instance, Capra, Fritjof, *The Turning Point*, (Bantam Books, N.Y., 1982); Ferguson, Marilyn, *The Aquarian Conspiracy*, (L.A.: J.P. Tarcher, 1980); Henderson, Hazel, *Creating Alternative Futures*, (Berkley Windhover Books, N.Y., 1978); Naisbitt, John, *Megatrends*, (Warner Books, N.Y. 1982).

18. Independent Commission, *op. cit.*
19. Aurelio Peccei, "Food Prospects...", *Globe and Mail*, Toronto, Oct 20, 1983, p. 11.
20. We are thinking of no more than the point made in the remark attributed to Winston Churchill that "Democracy is the worst political system ever conceived, except for all the others."
21. The Senate is the institution most commonly mentioned in such proposals. At this stage in our political evolution, however, an approach along this route would appear to run a risk of focusing effort and attention on the exercise of power rather than on the achievement of consensus among a wide range of interest groups.
22. For a compilation on the subject, as it relates to the operation of the Bahá'í community itself, see Adib Taherzadeh, *Trustees of the Merciful*, (Bahá'í, London, 1972).
23. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, pp. 32-33.
24. Abdu-ur-Rahman ibn Khaldun, Muslim jurist, historian and statesman, was born in Tunis, May 27, 1332 A.D. After a lengthy career of public service, he retired to work on his massive *History*. By November 1377 he had completed the famous *Muqaddimah* (Introduction), one of the great scholarly achievements of all time, "with words and ideas pouring into my head like cream into a churn." The *Muqaddimah* marks the first attempt ever to apply the scientific method to the study of human society, and pre-dates the work of the earliest European social thinkers by a century and a half.
25. Catley-Carlson, Margaret, "Oversights, insights and new sites: women, human settlements and development", notes for an address at the Annual Conference of MATCH International Centre, Ottawa, September 24, 1983, (CIDA Documents) p.15.
26. Our view of the validity of the principle is not altered by the misunderstanding that has attended its practice in Iran. There is every evidence that this misunderstanding has been deliberately fostered by the Muslim clergy carrying out the persecution, as a means of justifying their actions to elements of the population less susceptible to theological arguments.
27. Bahá'í principles related to education are briefly summarised in *Bahá'í Education: A Compilation* (Bahá'í Community of Canada, Toronto, 1977). For a view of some of their implications see H. B. Danesh, *A Violence Free Society*, Bahá'í Studies, Vol. 6 (Association for Bahá'í Studies, Ottawa, 1979).
28. *Gleanings*, XVIII; *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh* (Bahá'í World Centre, Haifa, 1978), p. 69.
29. The Hon. George Brown, *The Confederation Debates in the Province of Canada, 1865*, The Carleton Library, #2 (McLelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1963) p. 61.