

The Universal House of Justice

July 1976

To the Friends assembled at the International Teaching Conference in Anchorage

Dearly loved Friends,

Sixty years ago 'Abdu'l-Bahá summoned the valiant North American believers to open the remote and inhospitable regions which form the climatic frontiers of the Arctic and the sub-Arctic. The full implementation of His wish had to be postponed for some years, until, under the leadership of His beloved grandson, well-grounded administrative bases were established from which Bahá'í crusaders could set out in conquest of these prized and virgin lands.

As early as 1915, however, we see a first wave of itinerant teachers and short-time settlers directing their steps towards Alaska in an attempt to open it to the light of Bahá'u'lláh. This was followed by a second wave of determined pioneers and spiritual conquerors who, ever since the first Seven Year Plan, demonstrated their exemplary enthusiasm and caused "the breezes ... of the love of God" to "perfume the nostrils of the inhabitants" of that "vast country." In Canada, in response to the Master's call, a succession of homefront pioneers settled and opened the length and breadth of their land, so rich in promise "whether from a material or a spiritual standpoint," and whose destiny is to "become the object of the glance of Providence." To the fringes of Greenland North American and European pioneers brought the light of God's Faith, and provided the means for the fire of His love to be kindled in that land, in anticipation of the day when it will become "a divine rose garden and a heavenly paradise." Iceland, specifically mentioned by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the Tablets of the Divine Plan, was opened and consolidated, and has, through the warm response of its inhabitants to the Call of God, undoubtedly become one of the shining beacons of the "lights of the Most Great Guidance" in the North.

As a result of these movements and organized activities, the call of the Kingdom reached "the ears of the Eskimos," and the divine spark was struck in their lands. Praise be to God, today there are many who justly belong to the rank of heroes from among that noble race, and whose hearts are burning with His love. Upon the zeal and endurance of these enkindled believers will depend the early fulfillment of the Master's glowing promises. The teaching work among the Indians of the northern lands of the Western Hemisphere has likewise borne rich fruit, as tribe upon tribe has been enlisted under the banner of Bahá'u'lláh. Whether in Alaska's southeastern islands and rugged mountains, or in Canada's huge Indian reserves from the west to the east, many Amerindian believers have arisen to serve the Cause, and through their joint efforts, their sacrificial endeavors and distinctive talents they bid fair to accelerate the dawn of the day when they will be so "illumined as to enlighten the whole world."

Many are the goals which now challenge the peoples of the North under the Five Year Plan: encouraging and educating the children and stimulating and guiding the youth; a wider participation of women in Bahá'í services; a greater assumption by the indigenous inhabitants of these regions of responsibilities in the leadership and administration of the community; a bolder proclamation of the Faith by radio and television; and a more far-flung and intensified campaign of teaching, audaciously conceived by National Spiritual Assemblies and their agencies and vigorously executed by Local Spiritual Assemblies and individual believers, aiming at a vast increase in the number of adherents to the Faith from every segment of society, a multiplication of Bahá'í administrative institutions, and a richer and more diverse range of publications in all media. What will set the seal on the success of the Plan and pave the way for the long-awaited and divinely promised glories of the future, is a mightier effort by every supporter of the Most Great Name in those climes to increasingly deepen themselves in the teachings, to pour forth their substance in the path of His love, to resolve to conform their personal lives to the high standards set in His teachings, and to undertake more daring tasks however great the sacrifice,

and more extensive travels however arduous the voyage. In this wise will they draw nearer to the Spirit of Bahá'u'lláh and become true and radiant signs of His Most Great Guidance. These are the tasks! This is the work!

We pray at the Sacred Threshold that the Bahá'ís of the North may in the not-too-distant future transform the Arctic into that spiritual rose garden and heavenly paradise longed and yearned for by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and that its peoples may be bountifully blessed and lovingly guided in their selfless services to promote the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh.

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]