

The Universal House of Justice

20 July 2000

To the Friends Gathered at the Youth Conference in Vancouver, 20–24 July 2000

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

You come together at a time of immense promise for the national community to which you belong. It would be difficult to exaggerate the strengths that the Cause in Canada has developed, at the threshold of a new century. The level of unity that has been achieved, the energy and competence being displayed by your Regional Councils, the financial sacrifices that the Canadian believers are so wholeheartedly making to support the work of the Cause internationally, the trust and respect that the community's collective efforts have won from governmental and non-governmental institutions alike, its extraordinary record of service in both the teaching and pioneering fields overseas, and most recently the dramatic mobilization of human resources across your vast country through the Canadian believers' embrace of the institute program being promoted by your National Assembly—such a brilliant demonstration of spiritual power must excite the admiration of any fair-minded observer.

In all of these great advances, Canadian Bahá'í youth have taken an increasingly vital role. In doing so you have developed capacities that distinguish you in Canadian society, however progressive, however highly trained, however materially well-endowed various segments of that society may be. You need to ask yourselves how these impressive capacities can best be used.

One evening, in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Sutherland Maxwell in Montreal, 'Abdu'l-Bahá summed up in a few intensely poignant words both the crisis He saw engulfing humankind and the sole means of deliverance:

Today the world of humanity is walking in darkness because it is out of touch with the world of God. That is why we do not see the signs of God in the hearts of men.... When a divine spiritual illumination becomes manifest in the world of humanity, when divine instruction and guidance appear, then enlightenment follows, a new spirit is realized within, a new power descends, and a new life is given. It is like the birth from the animal kingdom into the kingdom of man. When man acquires these virtues, the oneness of the world of humanity will be revealed.... Then will the justice of God become manifest, all humanity will appear as the members of one family, and every member of that family will be consecrated to cooperation and mutual assistance.

It is to this divine illumination that you have turned your hearts. It is the force of this spiritual enlightenment—sharply focused in the institute process—that is opening your minds even wider to the possibilities of the Cause of God. And it is not surprising that, for those who are exposed to such influences, the experience does indeed seem like the birth from an old condition to an entirely new one.

With hearts filled with admiration for all that your community is accomplishing and with the brightest hopes for the contributions that you as youth will particularly bring to the great adventure ahead, we urge you to make a wholehearted commitment to this vision of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Like the rest of the world, Canadian society stands in urgent need of moral transformation. Such transformation, as amply evidenced by decades of contentious history, cannot be achieved through political passion, the conflict of vested interests, or technical recipes. What is called for is a spiritual revival, as a prerequisite to the successful application of political, economic and technological instruments. But there is a need for a catalyst. Be assured that, in spite of your small numbers, you are the channels through which such a catalyst can be provided.

Be not dismayed if your endeavors are dismissed as utopian by the voices that would oppose any suggestion of fundamental change. Trust in the capacity of this generation to disentangle itself from the embroilments of a divided world. To discharge your responsibilities, you will have to show forth courage, the courage of those who cling to standards of rectitude, who champion the cause of justice, whose lives are characterized by purity of thought and action, and whose purpose is directed by love and indomitable faith.

As one of the coexecutors of the Divine Plan, your community's mandate is not, of course, limited to Canada. It is worldwide, and this global perspective must frame both your deliberations and your endeavors. Be confident that, as you turn your hearts and minds to the challenge facing you, you will be surrounded by our ardent prayers at the Holy Threshold that Bahá'u'lláh will empower you to realize your highest aspirations.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]