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FOREWORD

In this day of the atomic bomb, the iron curtain, and an armed peace, it may seem almost quixotic to talk of international human rights.¹ Yet the striking fact is that the demand for international human rights did not originate in the governments which framed the United Nations Charter. On the contrary, it was the result of widespread feeling here and abroad that no postwar international organization would be successful in preserving world peace without a firm foundation in human rights. It was this conviction which in a sense forced the human rights provisions into the United Nations Charter and, indeed, made them, in the opinion of many, almost the very core of the United Nations. These provisions, in turn, have led to the drafting of the Declaration of Human Rights, the Covenant on Human Rights, and the Conventions on Freedom of Information and Genocide. Furthermore, the various peace treaties for World War II so far concluded contain human rights provisions which are now the subject of bitter discussion in the organs of the United Nations.

The problems facing the draftsmen of these various documents are both numerous and difficult. Nor are forceful critics of the results thus far, lacking. Perhaps the most fundamental and critical question is that of enforcement. Certainly one is tempted at times to wonder if all these declarations, covenants, and conventions will amount to little more than scraps of paper until another world war or similar catastrophe drastically changes the shape of our world community.

I venture to think, though, that the work so vividly described in this symposium is not in vain. For one thing, even the most despised paper provisions may perhaps, unknown to their critics, accomplish certain definite, positive results, as did the League of Nations minorities guarantees. For another thing, as Professor Chafee so wisely observes, we must not let contemporary events be the sole criterion for this work. International human rights can and should be laboriously etched out now, not perhaps for immediate world use, but for the future. Today's labor will not be wasted if it makes available to our world a firm foundation on which to

¹ This symposium will be published in two parts, the second of which will appear in the Autumn, 1949, issue.

build. Finally, it seems to me that man today, in this society of police states, security restrictions, and strong government controls of all kinds, may well need for his spiritual happiness and his human dignity some striking reaffirmation of the rights of the individual, rights not against but in the organized community of his fellows throughout the world. Our goal may be far distant and out of sight. But at least it is something to know that we and others have made a beginning and perhaps even more than a beginning toward defining and reaching that goal.

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