

Parallel NGO Summit:

Spotlight on human rights of youth in Francophone countries

Coinciding with the meeting of heads of state and government of Francophone countries is a parallel summit of non-governmental organizations. Convening in Moncton on August 30, its purpose is to focus world attention on critical social and human rights issues in member countries of La Francophonie, and to make recommendations to the political leaders.

Organizing the parallel summit is a coalition of six Canada-based NGOs:

- Amnesty International (French Canadian section);
- the New Brunswick Committee for the World March of Women in the Year 2000;
- the Canadian Labour Congress;
- Développement et Paix;
- Oxfam Canada / Projet Acadie; and
- the Maritime Fishermen's Union.

Says Michel Frenette, director general of the French Canadian section of Amnesty International, "The summit of heads of state and government is a closed meeting that does not allow for the participation of the many non-governmental organizations that fight for the rights and welfare of the most disadvantaged people in Francophone nations. The parallel summit will allow us to address issues that will probably not be on the agenda of the official summit."

The parallel summit program runs from August 30 to September 4. On the first day, Développement et Paix and Oxfam Canada / Projet Acadie are jointly hosting a meeting on international development challenges in La Francophonie. Later that day is a meeting on women and poverty, organized by the committee of the World March of Women 2000.

September 1 is the date for a meeting on how globalization is affecting the fishing industry; this is organized by the Maritime Fishermen's Union. Featured on the program is a guest speaker discussing union rights in French-speaking African countries. In the

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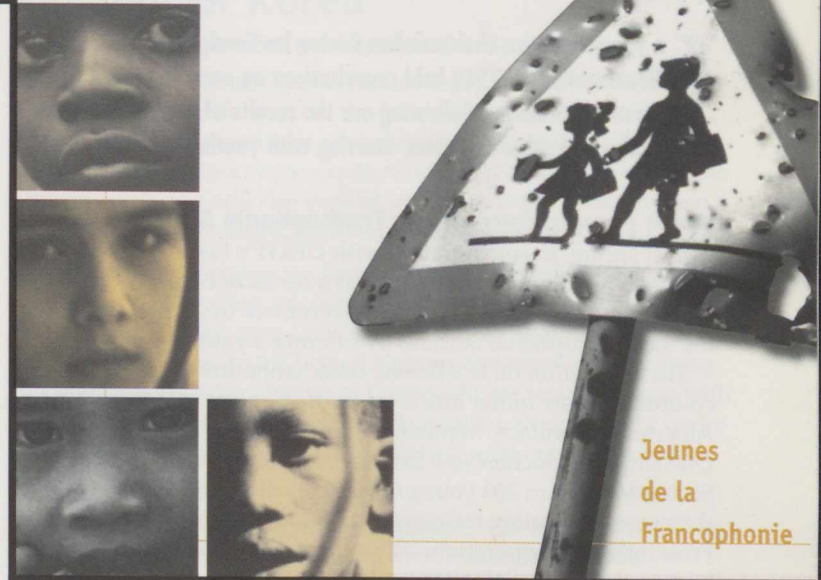


image: Amnesty International

evening, the Canadian Labour Congress and the New Brunswick Federation of Labour are hosting a conference on union rights in the face of globalization; this is followed by workshops looking at union rights and freedoms in New Brunswick and Canada.

On September 2, Amnesty International is holding a conference on human rights issues in Francophone and other countries. The planned main focus of discussion is the drafting of children for military service, sexual slavery and child labour. Amnesty hopes to present a petition to the assembled heads of state and government, requesting them to adopt an optional protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to prohibit military recruitment of anyone younger than 18. The plan is to spotlight the many human rights violations committed against youth, not only in Francophone countries but throughout the world.

On September 3, at a closing press conference, organizers are to report on results and announce recommendations for the heads of state and government. Also planned is the official launch of a major Amnesty International book on torture, by New Brunswick poet and author Serge Patrice Thibodeau.

The parallel summit closes on Saturday, September 4, with outdoor entertainment organized by Amnesty and featuring groups from two New Brunswick high schools: Mathieu-Martin and Louis J. Robichaud. ●—