

Article 68 provides that the economic and social council shall set up commissions in economic and social fields and for the promotion of human rights.

That is a brief summary, Mr. Speaker.

All freedom-loving Canadians I am sure will note with gratification that the united nations have sought faithfully to carry out the purposes laid down in the charter. Pursuant to article 68 the economic and social council has already established a commission on human rights. At its first session in London the economic and social council on February 16, 1946, defined the functions of the commission on human rights, as follows:

The work of the commission shall be directed towards submitting proposals, recommendations and reports to the council regarding:

- (a) an international bill of rights;
- (b) international declarations or conventions on civil liberties, the status of women, freedom of information and similar matters;
- (c) the protection of minorities;
- (d) the prevention of discrimination on grounds of race, sex, language or religion.

To which at a later meeting on June 21, 1946, there was added the following:

- (e) any other matter concerning human rights not covered by items a, b, c and d.

By a further resolution on June 21, 1946, the economic and social council took steps for the compilation of a universal survey of the subject in very definite terms which are available to all hon. members.

The commission on human rights has met and organized itself and has set up several subcommissions of experts. One of these is a subcommission on freedom of information and of the press. Its function is:

—in the first instance, to examine what rights, obligations and practices should be included in the concept of freedom of information, and to report to the commission on human rights on any issues that may arise from such examination.

The other subcommission which has already been created is on the protection of minorities.

A drafting committee has already been established for the purpose of formulating a preliminary draft of an international bill of human rights in accordance with the great concepts laid down in the charter of the united nations. This draft will then be submitted to all states which are members of the united nations, for their observations, suggestions and proposals. The objective is that the proposed bill may be submitted to the general assembly of the united nations in 1948.

While no Canadian is a member of the commission on human rights, Canada is one of the eighteen nations represented on the economic and social council which created it.

The two members of this government who have attended and participated in the sessions of the economic and social council are the present Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Martin) and the present Minister of National Defence (Mr. Claxton), and I think we all owe them a great debt of gratitude for the work they accomplished in these deliberations.

It is obvious, Mr. Speaker, that any document so far-reaching as an international bill of rights is of great importance to the people of Canada. It is essential therefore that our Canadian representatives should have the advantage of the fullest possible expression by the Canadian parliament and the Canadian people of their views on this subject. We must be ready to consider the draft international bill of human rights when it is referred to us.

One of the recommendations of the economic and social council adopted at the meeting in June, 1946, is as follows—and this is very important to us here:

Members of the united nations are invited to consider the desirability of establishing information groups or local human rights committees within their respective countries to collaborate with them in furthering the work of the commission on human rights.

No action along these lines has been taken in Canada.

The joint committee of both houses of parliament which by the resolution now under discussion it is proposed to establish will undoubtedly give a lead along these lines. I think it can be said with safety that our Canadian attitude would be to have voluntary committees instead of those under governmental direction or control. It is doubtful that the Canadian people would look with favour upon organizations set up under government auspices. Nevertheless it is not too soon to draw attention to the desirability of the Canadian people giving widespread and intense study to this vital and far-reaching subject.

May I be permitted, sir, with respect, to refer to what has been said in this house before in connection with this subject, especially by my hon. friend the member for Lake Centre (Mr. Diefenbaker), whom I congratulate. There are certain historic landmarks of tremendous value to us in Canada. If we as a Canadian parliament and a Canadian people are to make our appropriate contribution to the formulation of world opinion on the subject of human rights and freedom, it is well that we should briefly look back to some of the historic landmarks in mankind's progress along the road to freedom. They include—and these things are funda-