

The government felt that the classification of countries according to an assessment grid “would not serve the overall interests of Canadian development assistance or of Canadian foreign policy.”⁽¹¹⁾ There are, however, established precedents available from the Nordic countries and from the United States, for cyclical human rights reviews not involving a graduated grid.⁽¹²⁾ Moreover, as the Sub-Committee heard at its meeting of 29 May 1990, the government has been working quietly to create a short list of human rights—evaluative “proxies” from which they could extrapolate the broader human rights picture of a country as part of an annual review.

A witness directly involved in the development of these assessment criteria—Professor Rhoda Howard—offered testimony concerning a new manual for monitoring human rights, prepared for foreign service officers on behalf of External Affairs and International Trade Canada.⁽¹³⁾ Four “proxy” rights were selected for users of the manual, each of which is thought to be a reliable indicator of a range of human rights components within an important category of rights. These are *freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention*, *right to food*, *non-discrimination* and *freedom of expression*. An illustration of the concept of a “proxy” right is that respect for “freedom of expression” in a country is considered to be a good indicator of the level of freedom of association and democratic political participation that prevails.

According to Professor Howard, the use of reports based on these proxy rights for country analysis is not mandatory, and such reports are only one segment of the information mix that is compiled by External Affairs officials. Yet even as mere guideposts, they are likely to be used commonly in field reports about other nations. These human rights standards, the reasoning behind their selection and the policy responses that might be engendered by reportage following these guidelines, have not been the subject of public debate. Are they optimal in terms of coverage, reliability and practical use in the field? Is it appropriate to develop a menu of possible responses to be employed by Canada in light of the findings produced by using these criteria? (A sample of such a menu appears as Appendix I.) The Sub-Committee will foster an open discussion of the appropriateness of these human rights guidelines.

2. The short list of rights referred to above has already been used once in the process of deliberation on the amounts and channels of ODA to be provided by Canada to a particular country⁽¹⁴⁾. Contrary to the recommendation of *For Whose Benefit* (the Winegard Report), that analysis of countries on human rights grounds ought to be “transparent,”⁽¹⁵⁾ the government had decided that such annual assessments would be done by Cabinet,⁽¹⁶⁾ and thus would be *in camera*. The precise criteria used by Cabinet, their information base, the nature of the decision-making process and the priority given to various factors in the foreign relations sphere continue to be unavailable to the public. Human rights advocates