

Habitat Forum – cousin to Habitat

Habitat, the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, held in Vancouver, B.C., from May 31 to June 11, was, as had been expected, the largest such gathering ever convened under the auspices of the world organization, with an attendance record of some 2,000 delegates.

In some ways even more remarkable, however, was the Habitat Forum, held concurrently with the UN conference, which was attended by an estimated 5,000 representatives of non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations and agencies concerned with the problems on the Habitat agenda.

Skilful renovation

A combination conference, demonstration and exhibit site was provided for the Habitat Forum by the reconversion of a former airfield, that consisted of five large hangars. These somewhat unpromising structures were transformed into a handsome complex of meeting-rooms, theatres, exhibition-halls, workshops, restaurants and snack-bars. The renovation program made skilful use of salvage and recycled materials, including a good deal of local wood. The buildings were embellished with carvings, paintings and fabrics, many of which echoed traditional designs used by the Indians of the Pacific Coast. For example, a 70-foot totem pole portraying the conference theme was specially carved for the event.

More than 100 experts on various aspects of human settlements, from almost as many countries, took part in the Habitat Forum discussions.

Elaborate presentations

Demonstrations and exhibits, many of which were large outdoor presentations, added an extra "dimension" to the Forum sessions. At least 12 innovative houses were built "on-site" before and during the conference. The Habitat Forum exhibits included illustrations of applied technology (such as solar-heat collectors and stills), wind-pumps and sewage-recycling systems (for a description of a notable Canadian sewage-recycling invention see the lead article in this issue). A prototype of the winning entry in the international

design contest for rehabilitation of a "squatter" settlement in the Philippines was exhibited, and another exhibit portrayed a commune system of the type to be seen in the People's Republic of China.

Located on the Forum site was a highly-sophisticated mobile television unit, which recorded all major sessions, events and speeches on audio-tape (copies of this audio-visual material were made available to the delegates at cost). The unit – which was, in effect, a self-contained TV production facility – was available to visiting broadcasters who had brought their own crews or were prepared to use a Habitat Forum crew.

Facilities also existed for originating "live" broadcasts from the Habitat Forum, including "tie-in" to international satellite networks. The mobile TV unit had four Norelco cameras, as well as three video-tape recorders. All cameras were mobile. Cables reached all parts of the site.

Canadian accession to international human rights covenants

The Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations deposited with the Secretary-General on May 19 Canada's instruments of accession to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and to the latter's Optional Protocol.

Although the three documents were adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1966, they only came into force earlier this year, on January 3 and March 23. They will enter into force for Canada in three months.

Canada's action followed the Federal-Provincial Conference on Human Rights held last December. This conference, and earlier consultations with the provinces, enabled agreement to be reached on the modalities of Canada's accession and on their implementation in Canada, given the division of jurisdiction between the federal and provincial governments.

Because the provisions of the covenants affect several areas of federal jurisdiction, responsibility for their implementations will lie with a number

of federal departments. The provinces will take whatever steps are appropriate and hold regular consultations with the Federal Government, with respect to the implementation of these instruments which promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Children's literature prizewinners

The Canada Council has announced the first two winners of its new Children's Literature Prizes – Bill Freeman, for *Shantymen of Cache Lake* (James Lorimer & Company, Toronto) and Louise Aylwin, for *Raminagradu* (Editions du Jour, Montreal).

The prizes, each worth \$5,000, were presented to the authors in Vancouver on May 14, at a reception held in conjunction with the Pacific Rim Conference on Children's Literature.

The Canada Council established the Children's Literature Prizes as part of its book promotion and distribution program to aid and encourage Canadian authors. The prizes will be given annually to the authors of two books for young people (one in English, one in French) which are judged to be the best of their kind published during the preceding calendar year. Eligible are books written by Canadians, whether published in Canada or elsewhere.

Bill Freeman's *Shantymen of Cache Lake* is an adventure story about two young people working in a lumber camp in the Ottawa Valley in the 1870s. Only the characters in the book are fictional; everything else – the towns, the rivers, the shanties and the work of the shantymen – is based on historical fact and documented in the book by actual photographs.

The book, Mr. Freeman's first, grew out of his interest in social history, especially the trade union movement, in the 1870s and his concern with the lack of good Canadian literature for children.

Louise Aylwin's *Raminagradu* is a big purple bird who appears in Louise Aylwin's collection of fantasy stories for children aged "12 to 90". The stories are completely hand-lettered and illustrated by the author, with pictures for the reader to colour.

The book, Ms. Aylwin's first, has also won the 1974-75 Prix Marie-Claire Daveluy from ASTED, an association of professional librarians in Quebec.