

*Human Rights*

the rights of men and women do not depend upon the good will, the charity, or the caprice of rulers and governments, but are inherent within being human.

It is true that since 1948 men and women throughout this world have suffered tragic, tortuous abuses of their rights. That should not blind us to what has been achieved in the name of humanity. Among those achievements is the building up of a body of international law to which Governments can appeal and to which the critics of Governments can appeal. Although that body of law does not have the enforcement power that we could wish, it nonetheless provides a standard, a criterion by which Governments, institutions, and individuals can be measured and judged.

This remarkable document, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, has provided the foundation for the development of various declarations by Governments, including the Parliament of Canada. It can be said with accuracy that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is very much among the progeny of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Therefore, we can take heart from observing how, in 40 years, there has developed throughout the world a respect for the rights of people to be codified, articulated, and clarified in law, so that people can have some measure of civilized and rational defence against abuses. It is not enough to have only law; there must be power. Part of the power in any age, but particularly in this communication age, is knowledge, hence the importance of the proposal of Bill C-147, an Act to establish the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development.

The intent of this Bill and of this international centre will be to gather knowledge, assemble it, and disseminate it; to assist people seeking to enlarge their understanding and expand their knowledge, both within this country and beyond, so that the rights of men and women can enjoy an increased respect over what they have today.

I am very glad to say that this initiative was first recommended in June, 1986, in the report of the Special Joint Committee on Canada's International Relations, whose eminent House of Commons Chairman, the Minister of State for Finance (Mr. Hockin), I am glad to say, is present in the House.

I am grateful to have had the honour of participating in the work of that committee, and of seeing that an idea conceived and articulated in that committee's report is now gaining the possibility of legislative fruition today. Its practical value has since been underlined by the Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade, the Parliamentary Group on Haiti, and the Special Committee on the Peace Process in Central America.

We can note that the Bill's provisions reflect the general philosophy and approach outlined in the June, 1987, report entitled *International Co-operation for the Development of*

*Human Rights and Democratic Institutions*. This report was the result of a consultation involving several hundred Canadian and international organizations and individuals which was undertaken on our behalf by two special rapporteurs, Professor Gisèle Côté-Harper and Dr. John Courtney. As Chairman of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Rights I am very glad to add my voice, as I trust there will be expression from other members of that committee in this debate, to support the general thrust and intent of this legislation and the centre to which it will give life.

The centre's mandate will be based on the International Bill of Human Rights. It will endeavour to conduct its affairs in a way characteristic of the country in which it will serve, and under whose authority and by whose support it will serve, namely, it will look out to the world. It will not be confined to this country alone. Its mandate will add a new and unique element to Canada's efforts to promote human rights internationally. It will offer Canadian experience and resources to groups and agencies in other countries to assist them to develop their own institutions in support of rights and freedoms.

The centre will be authorized to provide technical assistance, training, and resources for the development of electoral, legislative, judicial, and legal law enforcement and correctional systems. It may assist non-governmental groups such as churches, co-operatives, trade unions, professional associations, and other community-based associations in their effort to gain a stronger voice for citizens. It may also support organizations and programs which seek to secure an equality of rights for disadvantaged groups including women, native peoples, minorities, the disabled, and the aging. It will be enabled to do so within our own borders, for this centre will not be confined to the city in which it will have its headquarters, but it will be given the legislative authority and capability to conduct its work throughout this country, as it will be authorized to conduct its work in other countries within the law of those countries.

Given the need to respect the rights of men and women, given the need for knowledge to strengthen the efforts of legislative parliamentary committees, and the efforts of individuals, groups, and organizations within this country to do precisely that, it is absolutely imperative that there be such a centre which can provide the knowledge and the expertise required to make the protests, the initiatives, and the desires of such groups and persons effective.

An examination of this legislation will arouse in us a greater concern for carrying out the cause of human rights in this country. Recently we had put before the House a report of the Standing Committee on Human Rights entitled *Human Rights and Aging in Canada*. It is one example, and I refer to it simply as an illustration of the need to recognize, perhaps with a lack of consciousness on the part of many Canadians, how the rights of men and women can be abused, the right to seek employment with some expectation that the person will be judged only on his or her merits, the right to have the normal