

ending. What the U.N. has done has been to see that the worldwide movement toward the extension of freedom is not allowed to halt, but is kept pushing toward the day when all nations and peoples shall be free.

Sometimes progress toward that goal is slow. The U.N. has done much to see that it never stops. That it has accomplished as much as it has in so short a time and in so divided a world is a greater achievement than many realize.

How has the United Nations sought to advance the cause of freedom? One way has been through its Commission on Human Rights. This body was formed in 1946. It accepted as its first task the writing of a Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Suggestions poured in from all over the world, but in two years of hard work the commission completed its labors. In December 1948 the Assembly adopted the Declaration without a dissenting vote, although a few Communist delegations abstained from giving it their endorsement.

The Declaration of Human Rights is too long to quote here. Its noble preamble and its 30 sections, each defining a right of human beings which it is the business of governments to see they can exercise, by now has been translated into 46 languages and distributed by every conceivable means in every part of the world. This formulation of the basic personal, political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights of every living man, woman and child is undoubtedly the most widely known statement the U.N. has ever made. If you have never read it, you should do so.

"But," someone objects, "isn't the Declaration of Human Rights just so many words? Fine-sounding words, to be sure, yet only words. No nation has to pay any attention if it doesn't want to. The nations where the Declaration is most needed are the ones where it is most ignored. So what good is it?"

It seems to us that the Declaration is worth a great deal, for at least three reasons. First, granted that it represents more aspiration than realization, it is a healthy thing for all the nations to see what their goals should be and to be measured by them. Second, the actual record shows that, although the Declaration is only five years old, it already has had a great influence in the writing of numbers of new constitutions and laws. Offhand we think of the constitutions of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Haiti, Indonesia, Syria and Puerto Rico; of new laws adopted or under consideration in Canada, West Germany, Sweden and Britain.

Nor is that the full story. What may be the final influence of one single episode such as that which Elizabeth Gray Vining, tutor of Japan's crown prince, mentions in her book, Windows for the Crown Prince? In the winter of 1950, says Mrs. Vining, she and her pupil took the Declaration of Human Rights "for the center of our study."

The third factor which makes the Declaration important goes back to its adoption. When it was before the U.N. Assembly, Mr. Vyshinsky attacked it bitterly on the ground that people do not inherently possess rights--as the American Declaration of Independence asserts they do--but that governments possess rights, by virtue of their sovereignty,