

INTRODUCTION

On October 2-4, 1998, the University of Toronto Faculty of Law held a three-day conference to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Faculty's International Human Rights Programme, founded by Professor Rebecca Cook, and to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The conference brought together 100 leading scholars, academics, activists and representatives of government who are active contributors to the field of international human rights through publications, advocacy and fieldwork. The conference sold out, with 275 people in attendance.

There were over 110 student and alumni participants, including speakers, Chairs, audience members and a roster of student volunteers who assisted with note-taking, logistics and preparing follow-up publicity on the conference. Student attendees took part in all of the conference activities, including the dinner banquet. Many of the speakers and Chairs were former human rights interns with the International Human Rights Programme, as well as dynamic thinkers in their fields.

The conference was exciting, not the least because of the cutting-edge topics discussed by the speakers: how can justice be achieved in the aftermath of severe human rights abuses in transitional countries such as South Africa, Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia? Are economic, social and cultural rights the "new rights" of the 21st century? How does constitutional law fit within international human rights law? Can economic development and labour rights co-exist? A final agenda, listing the conference panels and speakers is enclosed (see Appendix 1).

This conference was also uniquely Canadian, in that it explored Canada's role in the creation, promotion and implementation of international law. Conference speakers, Chairs and audience members identified and explored emerging and challenging human rights issues, and outlined future legal and policy directions for Canada in the protection and promotion of human rights, particularly directions where academic institutions, nongovernmental organizations and government can work together.