

are completed they will be made public. They will provide Canadians with important information on the state of human rights in Canada.

We are commemorating in the House of Commons the thirtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, not only as a reflection of the past and present importance of that historic document but also as an opportunity for us, as Canadians, to move forward. In doing so, we renew our commitment to ensure that everyone, everywhere, will enjoy fully the fundamental rights and freedoms described in the Universal Declaration.

**Mr. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon-Biggar):** Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a privilege to be able to speak on behalf of my party on this occasion marking the thirtieth anniversary of the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The adoption and proclamation of this Declaration by the UN General Assembly in 1948 marked a momentous step forward in the development of a sense of universal community and, I think, universal compassion. It sets forth those basic rights and fundamental freedoms to which men and women everywhere are entitled, without discrimination. It represents a standard, a goal, toward which we hope all member states of the UN will aspire.

Unfortunately the Declaration itself creates no binding legal obligations. However, it did give birth to two Covenants and a Protocol which are binding on signatories: the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Canada, I am glad to say, has acceded to all three.

● (1212)

Anyone who reads the declaration cannot but fail to notice the glaring contrast between what are declared human rights and the situation as it actually exists today in many countries around the world. It is an unfortunate fact that the world community has been unable, and in some cases unwilling, to give meaning to the words of the declaration. I am sure all members share my concern about this.

We on this side of the House believe that Canada must play a prominent and forceful role in keeping human rights issues to the fore at the United Nations. Wherever the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is given but lip service or openly scorned, and differences are repressed rather than resolved, violent struggle becomes likely. The United Nations charter is in harmony with the highest political insights when it affirms that the desire for peace is incompatible with the violation of basic human rights. We therefore hold inviolate the human dignity of each individual and seek to guarantee his or her physical and cultural well-being. Where religious and ethnic communities are surrounded by grave denials of civil and political rights, or the refusal of social, economic, or cultural justice, we declare our support for them as they demand freedom for their peoples.

### *Human Rights*

Individual justice and freedom are questions of concern to persons throughout the world, and as such they may transcend the normal prerogatives of national sovereignty.

Looking at the world today, it seems that human rights violations are becoming, in some instances, more blatant and more vicious than at any time since the second world war, and, as I indicated earlier, it is a matter of grave concern that the UN seems unable to deal with these problems. For example, the representations made by Canada and other countries last year to the UN Commission on Human Rights about events in Uganda failed to produce even an investigation into the situation. To date, nothing meaningful has developed with respect to the situation in Cambodia, beyond intimations that the Secretary General may eventually receive an invitation to visit that country. At the moment, we know little about the circumstances which are driving thousands to flee Vietnam at appalling risks to themselves. We are all familiar with the problems of human rights in eastern Europe.

My party believes that a major step toward ensuring respect for the Declaration of Human Rights would be to create the post of a UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, with the power to investigate alleged violations whenever and wherever they occur. Canada has supported this in the past, and we urge the government to continue to press, in the strongest possible terms and at all appropriate opportunities, for the creation of such a post.

We would also urge, as another means of giving expression to the deep concern which all Canadians share about human rights, that Canada must minimize its material assistance to and symbolic approval of such governments that commit gross violations of human rights.

The UN has accomplished a great deal since its creation. Much remains to be done. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights is an inspiration to us all.

In conclusion, I join in the tribute to Dr. John P. Humphrey who played the important role of chairman of the drafting committee, representing this country in the drafting of this landmark declaration. It is our sentiment that it is the most significant declaration ever made by the international community. We in this party look forward to an even higher profile on the part of the Government of Canada to ensure that the statements made in this important declaration are brought to proper fruition.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood):** Mr. Speaker, on my own behalf and on behalf of my party I am glad to be associated with the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. MacEachen) and the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar (Mr. Hnatyshyn) in asking this House to take note of and recognize the thirtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I am glad, too, that the interparliamentary union suggested and recommended this recognition. I congratulate them for it.