

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, December 10, 1973

The House met at 2 p.m.

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

### INDIAN AFFAIRS AND NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

Seventh report of Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development—Mr. Buchanan.

[Editor's Note: For text of above report, see today's Votes and Proceedings.]

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### HUMAN RIGHTS

#### CREATION OF FEDERAL COMMISSION FOR THE PROTECTION OF EGALITARIAN RIGHTS

**Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Justice):** Mr. Speaker, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations on December 10, 1948, the General Assembly proclaimed the declaration as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations. Article 2 of the declaration contains the following statement:

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

In pursuance of the ideals set forth in the declaration, the government of Canada has been active in combatting discriminatory practices in a number of ways. The Fair Labour Code, the Public Service Employment Act and the Unemployment Insurance Act all contain anti-discrimination provisions. Such provisions also appear in the fair wages and hours of labour regulations, the fair wages policy order and the national housing loan regulations. These measures are implemented by investigation and conciliation conducted by special staffs of the departments and agencies concerned. These activities have been most effective toward achieving the goal of eliminating discrimination within their scope of application.

On this occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it gives me great pleasure to announce that the government now proposes to deal with these matters in a more comprehensive fashion. Cabinet has recently approved the creation of a federal commission for the protection of egalitarian rights.

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

**Mr. Lang:** This decision follows upon a proposal made on the basis of studies conducted by my department and

after consultation with provincial human rights bodies and other experts in the field. In particular, I should like to acknowledge the work of my colleague, the Minister of Labour (Mr. Munro), and his officials, especially in relation to the rights of women. That work and his proposals to protect women from discrimination, originally intended for the Labour Code, will now be included in the legislation to establish this commission, which is to be introduced early in the next session of parliament.

The bill will contain provision for the principles and procedures under which the commission would operate and establish the necessary powers of enforcement. In addition to being charged with administering the act, the commission would have an important role in promoting research and public education in relation to its purposes and functions. It would maintain close liaison with its equivalents in the provinces in order to foster common and improved policies and practices and to avoid conflict in cases of common jurisdiction. It would also keep abreast of developments respecting human rights at the United Nations and in other countries. In this way Canadian arrangements for the elimination of discriminatory practices could be constantly improved.

In formulating the above proposals, the government has been greatly assisted by suggestions and recommendations made by many individuals and bodies, and particularly by various women's organizations, for the establishment of such a commission at the federal level.

**Mr. R. Gordon L. Fairweather (Fundy-Royal):** Mr. Speaker, in Alexander Solzhenitsyn's 1970 Nobel lecture, which the government of the Soviet Union would not let him leave the country to give in Stockholm, this brave man said:

A quarter of a century ago, with the great hopes of mankind, the United Nations was born. Alas, in the immoral world it, too, became immoral. It is not a United Nations but a United Governments, in which those freely elected and those imposed by force and those which seized power by arms are all on a par. Through the mercenary bias of the majority, the United Nation's jealousy worries about the freedom of some peoples and pays no attention to the freedom of others. By an officious vote it rejected a review of private complaints—the groans, shouts and pleadings of individual, common, plain people, insects too small for such a great organization. The United Nations never tried to make binding on governments, a condition of their membership, the Declaration of Human Rights, the outstanding document of its 25 years—and thus the United Nations betrayed the common people to the will of governments they had not chosen.

● (1410)

Although Solzhenitsyn's cri de cœur might seem pessimistic to some of us, I think it is right that we remember, in these days of high-sounding exhortations, the harsh realities of the lives of many citizens of the world. After all, unbelievable as it may seem, some people in the world