

Official Opening of Atlantic Human Rights Centre

Fredericton (NB) - November 23, 1989 - The first human rights centre in Atlantic Canada will mark its official opening on Saturday, December 9 with a one-day symposium on human rights issues in the region.

The symposium will be held in conjunction with official opening ceremonies of the Atlantic Human Rights Centre (AHRC) scheduled for 1:30 in the Boardroom of Holy Cross House at St. Thomas University in Fredericton.

The Centre was established at St. Thomas University in September 1988. As part of its mandate, AHRC studies human rights issues in Atlantic Canada covering specifically unique regional problems and community education. Consistent with this aim, the Centre develops solutions and strategies that are necessary for resolving issues in the area of human rights.

According to Dr. Abdul Lodhi, Assoc. Prof. of Sociology at STU and Director of the Centre, it is very important to launch collective efforts such as AHRC. "This opening marks the beginning of a united endeavour on behalf of the four Atlantic provinces to explore social and economic inequalities which pose a serious challenge to human dignity and freedom," Dr. Lodhi said.

Dr. Lodhi added that the

protection of individual human rights and remedies in the event of their violation requires cooperation and solidarity on behalf of all Canadians. "The Centre strongly emphasizes action-oriented research and development projects to achieve these goals and to further the cause of a peaceful and just society," he said.

Since its establishment, AHRC has been active in various projects and events related to human rights; including the recent National Symposium on Interfaith Dimensions of Canadian Multiculturalism which was held at St. Thomas University in October. During the past six months, the Centre also completed research on a consultation study leading to a comprehensive report in the near future. In cooperation with the Friends of Bernie Vigod,

the Centre initiated the annual Vigod Memorial Lecture in human rights. Judge Rosalie Abella, Chair of the Ontario Law Reform Commission, will give the inaugural lecture on January 25, 1990.

The Centre employed three research assistants during 1989. A special projects coordinator organizes events and activities in which the Centre is involved. Funding for these activities has been forthcoming from various government and private sources.

To mark the opening ceremonies at 1.30 p.m., Gordon Fairweather, Chairperson of the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada will unveil the Centre's plaque. Speakers at the official opening include the Hon. Russel King, NB Minister of Advanced Education and Training, Constantine Passaris, Chairperson of the NB Human Rights Commission and Mons. throughout the Atlantic

Rev. George Martin, President of Saint Thomas University.

As part of the one-day symposium, two separate roundtable sessions will commence in the Boardroom of Holy Cross House at 9:30 a.m and 2:30 p.m. respectively. These sessions will feature representatives of various related private organizations as well as provincial and federal government departments from provinces. The public is

cordially invited to attend.

For further information contact:

Dr. Abdul Lodhi
Director

Atlantic Human Rights Centre
(506) 452-0549

Melynda Jarratt
Special Projects Coordinator
Atlantic Human Rights Centre
(506) 452-0549

Debate Held During Weekend

Last weekend a debate was held at the University of New Brunswick at which it was concluded that the curriculum for English in grade school should not be radically changed.

Prof. D. Samad of the Dept. of English at both UNB and Saint Thomas University, held a debate between his UNB English 1000 and his STU English 1-200. Dale Geddes, leader of the opposition from UNB overcame STU to win, the debate.

The moot for the debate was chosen by the government (STU) "Be it resolved that since the high school system is failing to teach effectively the reading and writing of English,

then the entire curriculum in English be radically changed."

The government arguing in favour of the bill quickly went to the defence of the bill using surveys to support their reason for radical change. Garda Pauley, the Prime Minister from STU claimed that over 65% of all graduating students from FHS were illiterate and 30% of the freshmen students at university had only a ninth grade understanding of English.

Leader of the opposition Dale Geddes came out very strong in opposition to the bill. While recognizing the fact that there were illiterate people coming through the school system, Geddes argued that the radical change, in the

curriculum would only be hazardous and wasteful. Geddes turned his attack towards the government claiming that the survey used by the Prime Minister could have been manipulated giving false or distorted information.

Geddes, in his closing address, felt that the curriculum was flexible and that by modifying the curriculum problems could be alleviated. Geddes also stressed that the government introduced the curriculum two years ago and that the first group of students to fully come through the high school system would not graduate for at least another year. He closed his attack on the government by stating that the curriculum has not had a chance to prove itself and the government would be wasting more money.

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