

CANADA'S COMMITMENT TO Human Rights

For half a century, Canada and Canadians have played a leading role in enshrining respect for human rights in international law.

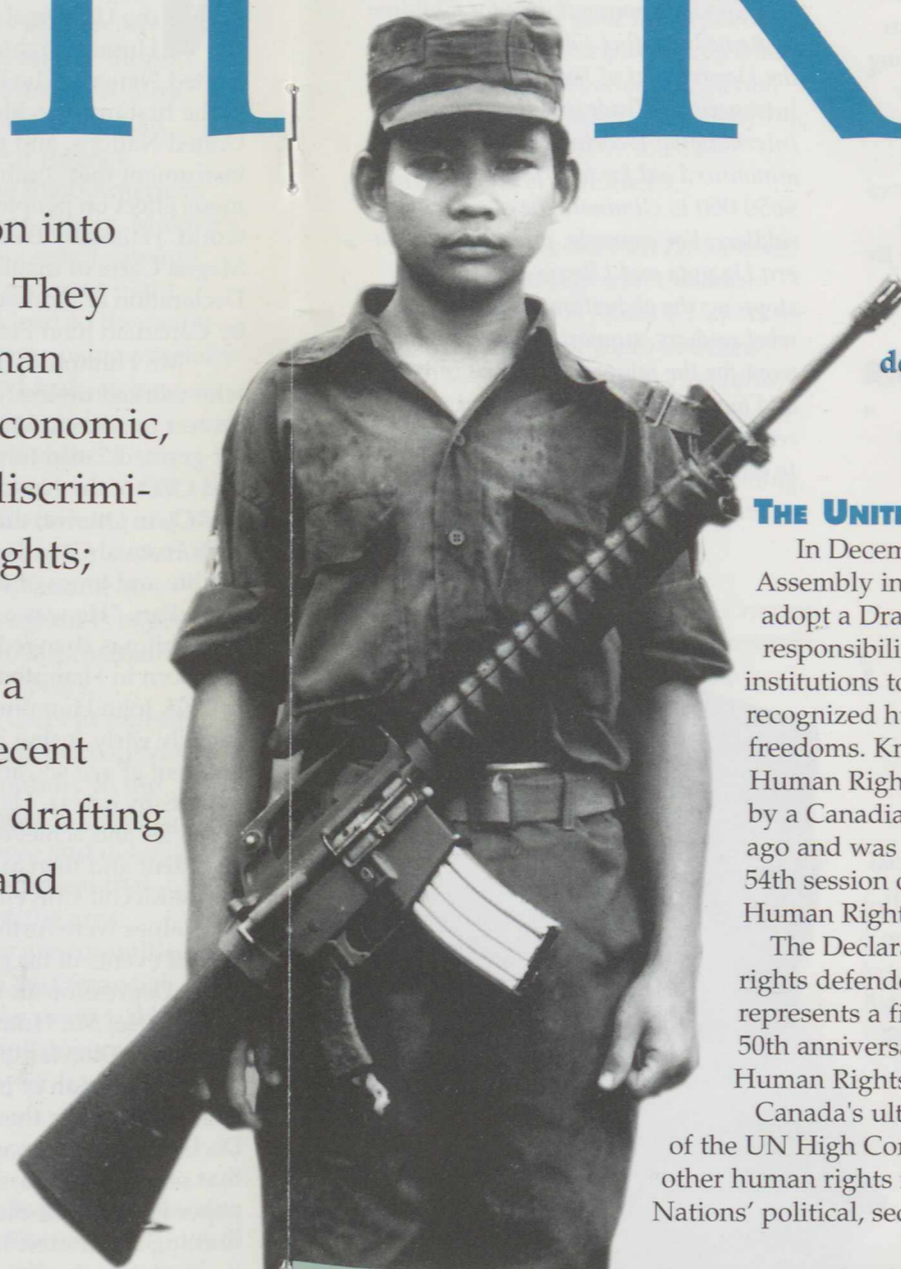
The Canadian connection originates with the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by John Peters Humphrey in 1947 (see page 7).

It has continued over subsequent years with Canada's participation in the writing of core international human rights treaties. These agreements translate the broad concepts

of the Universal Declaration into detailed treaty obligations. They focus on six aspects of human rights: civil and political; economic, social and cultural; racial discrimination; torture; women's rights; and children's rights.

Canada has also played a leading role in two more recent milestones of progress: the drafting of the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action at the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, and the establishment of the position of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

photo: Courtesy of UNICEF/4761/Chiasson



Respect for human rights is essential to the development of stable, democratic and prosperous societies at peace with one another. Canada is committed to using its economic, trading and development assistance relationships to promote respect for human rights. Multilateral organizations, such as the United Nations, are crucial to providing effective channels for influencing governments.

THE UNITED NATIONS

In December 1998, the UN General Assembly in New York is expected to adopt a Draft Declaration on the right and responsibility of individuals, groups and institutions to promote and protect universally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms. Known as the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, it was launched by a Canadian-Norwegian initiative 13 years ago and was approved this spring at the 54th session of the UN Commission on Human Rights.

The Declaration states the rights of human rights defenders throughout the world, and represents a fitting achievement to mark the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Canada's ultimate goal is to integrate the work of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and other human rights mechanisms into the United Nations' political, security and developmental work.

At this year's UN Commission on Human Rights, Canada took the lead on more resolutions than any other single country. These resolutions were:

- Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression;
- Integrating the Human Rights of Women throughout the UN System;
- Elimination of Violence Against Women;
- Working Group on a Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;
- Human Rights and Mass Exoduses;
- Effective Implementation of International Instruments on Human Rights;
- Impunity (this marked the first time that the central question of impunity for violations of human rights was placed on the United Nations agenda).

• cont'd on page 10



photo: Estate of John P. Humphrey

EVENTS

In 1998, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) has participated or will participate in the following events:

MARCH 23
O.D. Skelton Memorial Lecture: "Reasons to be Cheerful – Foreign Policy in a Changed World", Memorial University, St. John's, Newfoundland

JUNE 22-24
The Vienna Plus Five NGO International Forum, Government Conference Centre, Ottawa, Ontario

JUNE 22
Minister Axworthy launched an annual report, *For the Record 1997: The UN Human Rights System*, at the Vienna Plus Five NGO International Forum, Ottawa, Ontario

JULY
JULY 23-25
Symposium: "The Artist and Human Rights", National Arts Centre, Ottawa, Ontario

SEPTEMBER
SEPTEMBER 10-12
Conference: "Human Rights and the Internet", Radisson Hotel, Montreal, Quebec