

the existing Geneva Conventions in full, possibly by adapting them to modern warfare, was preferable to drawing up completely new regulations.

The strict observance of the Geneva Conventions, in the opinion of the Human Rights Commission, was the first step.

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### THE REFUGEE PROBLEM

Last November, 60 private American organizations concerned with the refugee problem met in Washington for the National Conference on World Refugee Problems. The meeting was convened by the United States Committee for Refugees in association with the American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Service and the American Immigration and Citizenship Conference. The ICRC was invited to attend and delegated Mr. C. Pilloud, director, to take part in a consultative capacity.

The purpose of the Conference was to rouse public interest in favour of refugees and to reach certain conclusions, the first being a definition of refugees. This being extremely topical, we believe our readers will be interested in the following quotation:

“ Service agencies are committed to the concept of assistance to refugees as a humanitarian act, viewing the refugee in the broadest sense as the victim of war, intolerance and social unrest, natural calamity, oppression, fear of persecution. They urge governments and intergovernmental and international voluntary agencies to move away from traditional rhetoric and standard approaches in their efforts to meet refugee problems. The refugee phenomenon has become too varied and complex in its manifestations, and too dangerous to peace and development throughout the world, to be responsive to old answers and historically conditioned reflexes. Such answers have little relevance to contemporary reality which witnesses refugees on every continent of the world, both within and outside of their native countries.

## MISCELLANEOUS

The definition of a refugee is often the first step in seeking solutions to his problem. Therefore, definitions should be recognized as temporary and pragmatic tools, often dictated by political pressures and limited resources, and in need of constant reviews. Flexibility is required so that categories of eligibility for refugee services do not become exclusionary. Therefore, any single definition, for all purposes and for all organizations, must be viewed with great caution.

At the same time, it is considered desirable that it is in an international or perhaps regional context that the broadest standards for the acceptance of international concern for *all* refugees should be developed.

The principles of self-determination and human dignity which must guide any such effort are implied in the United Nations Declaration on Territorial Asylum and in Article II of the Organization of African Unity Convention on refugees in Africa, "The granting of asylum to refugees is a peaceful and humanitarian act and shall not be regarded as an unfriendly act of a member state"."

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### THE FOUNDING OF AN INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

It may be recalled that Mr. René Cassin, who was the rapporteur at the United Nations General Assembly which, in 1948, adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, devoted the greater part of the Nobel Peace Prize which he had been awarded to the founding of an International Institute of Human Rights. In December 1969 that institute was inaugurated in Strasbourg. Its purposes are laid down in its Constitution some of the articles of which are quoted hereunder:

#### *Article 1*

There is hereby established at Strasbourg an "International Institute of Human Rights (René Cassin Foundation)", hereinafter