

in this Article would undoubtedly be strongly resisted by our press and other information agencies, as I am in a position to prove by quoting two comments made by a press association and a literary association:

(a) One said that:

"Article 4 is ambiguous and over-generalised. Every reputable newspaper in North America accords people the right to reply anyway."

and the other, and I quote:

(b) "Article 4 would also appear to be objectionable on the ground that it refers primarily to a civil right, which should not, in our opinion, be the subject of governmental control."

Article 5 provides for the encouragement by governments of the establishment of non-official organisations (the professional standard-setting bodies) which in their turn would encourage the maintenance of high standards of professional conduct along certain lines laid down in the article. There is a very strong feeling among information agencies in Canada that the matter of professional ethics should be left entirely to those engaged in information activities. The reply of one association was as follows:

"Our Association opposes the intrusion of governments into the field of professional ethics, and strongly favours the exclusion of any Article admitting such control. Article 5 is furthermore objectionable as tending inevitably to promote news agencies for the dissemination of the official point of view."

By way of somewhat personal comment, I might just say that as a Member of Parliament who loyally supports the present Government of Canada, I am often unable to achieve great sympathy for the opinions and views expressed by the Opposition press in our country. However, with the vast majority of my compatriots, I would defend very jealously the rights of that same Opposition press to criticise my Government as it sees fit, and I am tempted to quote the sentence which is erroneously attributed to Voltaire: "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it".

Articles 6 and 7. We believe that articles 6 and 7 relating to questions of trade practices and restrictions, are unnecessary and not relevant to an international convention on freedom of information. Moreover, I am afraid they could be used as escape clauses.

Article 10 states that if there should be any incompatibility between the provisions of the convention on freedom of information and the provisions relating to freedom of information to be included in the Covenant on Human Rights, the provisions of the Covenant shall prevail. As no agreement has yet been reached on the provisions relating to freedom of information to be incorporated in the Covenant on Human Rights, the acceptance of Article 10 of the draft convention on Freedom of Information would, in effect, commit governments to the overriding obligations of the Covenant on Human Rights, the content of which is as yet unknown.