

happened. Although I knew that the international promotion of human rights had no priority in Canada's foreign policy, it had never occurred to me that the government would carry its indifference to the point of abstaining in such an important vote. I could hardly have prevented the scandal even if the delegation had taken me into their confidence, but I could at least have warned them of the company in which they would probably find themselves.

"The next day, Dana Wilgress, a senior career diplomat who was on the Canadian delegation, stopped me in the corridor. He had something to tell me, he said, that would take the iron out of my soul: it had just been decided that Canada would vote for the Declaration in the plenary Assembly. I had no doubt whatsoever that this quick change in position was dictated solely by the fact that the government did not relish the company in which it found itself.

"It was therefore with bad grace that Canada joined the majority when the General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on the night of 10 December. Lester Pearson, explaining my country's vote, said that many of the articles of the Declaration were vague and lacking in precision. It would have been better, he said, if a body of jurists such as the International Law Commission had gone over the text before it was submitted to the General Assembly.

"This was probably *ex post facto* rationalization. The Canadians had certainly never made the suggestion before; nor had they made any effort, either in the Economic and Social Council or in the Third Committee, to make the Declaration more precise. Had the course Pearson preferred been followed, the Declaration could not have been adopted in 1948, with the consequences already suggested.

"A possible real reason for the Canadian abstention in the Third Committee may have been the government's fear that, if they voted for the Declaration, they might be accused of trespassing on the jurisdiction of the provinces under the constitution. But although this was mentioned in the explanation of vote, it is difficult to believe that it could have been a compelling reason. For in 1948 everyone agreed that the Declaration would not be binding in international law and would not, therefore, impose any legal obligations on member states....

"The countries which did abstain in the final vote [on] the night of 10 December were the six Communist countries then members of the United Nations, plus Saudi Arabia and South Africa."