

within Canada, and it is nothing to be ashamed of that we have had a little prodding from an impartial international committee to put our house in better order.

This issue concerned the loss of a special group right, something not available to all Canadians. The recognized rights of any group within a state must in their nature be exclusive, apart from, and in some respects in contradiction to, the general human rights available to all on a basis of equality and non-discrimination. If a language right is to have full meaning, it must be supported by measures to make possible its full expression. It will never be easy to establish such a right, and to give it substance, because there will always be many who honestly fear that to institutionalize differences of this kind may serve to sharpen these differences, and even put at risk the integrity of the state. To produce true equality for a particular group, governments may have to discriminate actively in their favour as, for example, when "affirmative action" programs are undertaken to improve the status of women. With these aspects in mind, it is to be expected that governments will approach the matter of group rights with considerable caution.

The sensitivity of the subject, and the wide variety of what may be desirable or possible in each particular state, has delayed the development in the United Nations of any universal guidelines on group rights. The last forty years have seen the successful elaboration of standards of human rights, and the development of international processes which encourage their implementation. But the concern has been primarily with the rights of individuals. Whenever it has been suggested that similar consideration should be given to the rights of minorities, this has been resisted by some states with the argument that since they themselves contain no minorities, there could be no universal consideration of the matter. This, more often than not, is a statement of policy rather than of fact, because all states contain minority groups of some sort.

Others have argued that the increasing development of the rights of individuals would eliminate the need for any special treatment for groups of persons. This may be true to the extent that prohibiting discrimination may protect individuals in a particular community from abuse.