



# Statements and Speeches

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## REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Statement by Dr. Jim Hawkes, Canadian Representative to the Third Committee at the Thirty-ninth Session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, December 6, 1984.

Member states will know that the Canadian political tradition is a democratic one that involves vigorous open debate between opposing political parties who are constantly vying for the responsibility of becoming the government. It is the Canadian voters who decide and governments are changed from time to time. What does not change, will not change, and has not changed even though we have changed the political party which governs, is the very strong commitment of the Canadian people and therefore their governments to the definition, expansion and protection of human rights.

It is the cornerstone of our belief in the protection of human rights that rights must be vested in the individual. If that belief is to become a reality then the individual must have access to resources and mechanisms that constantly encourage the individual to challenge both our laws and our administrative practices. This system works for us. It is not a system that we view as perfect but one that seeks perfection through constant evolution brought about by our commitment to supporting and encouraging the individual to challenge our practices. It is a system which attempts to ensure that the government of the day respects not only the rights of the majority, but perhaps more importantly the rights of minorities. We constantly seek to avoid the potential for tyranny that lies in any part of our system that might encourage those responsible for governing to believe that a state's responsibilities are so important that individual rights can be trampled on. History tells us that in situations of that kind sooner or later the people rebel and the situation is ultimately changed. But far too often blood is shed, lives are lost, families and communities are destroyed when the only redress available is armed confrontation.

It is our view that evolution is preferable to revolution and we enter into this debate today in the hope that our comments might be helpful to the international community as we seek progress by working together in our search for better human rights standards, and more effective means of ensuring the implementation of these standards.

In looking at our modern world from a human rights perspective, it is not difficult to conclude that the most massive violations of those human rights responsibilities inherent in the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights occur in states that have or tend towards totalitarian systems. During these periods when such states face any type of armed resistance then violations of these human rights and freedoms tend to multiply at a rapid and very disturbing rate.

Systems which encourage individuals to dissent freely and openly with their governments tend to produce governments that are the best protectors of the rights enshrined in the United Nations Charter. Respect for those who dissent from us politically breeds a healthy respect for the right to be different

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