

vigilance. The Canadian Government would welcome international action which would genuinely promote and protect this fundamental freedom universally, and has consistently shown an interest in the drafting of a convention to this end. In the Canadian view, however, serious and even irreconcilable differences of opinion exist on the principles underlying a convention on freedom of information. The Canadian Delegation to the thirteenth session of ECOSOC told the Council that the Canadian Government had consulted with the principal information agencies and associations and other interested bodies in Canada. It had found opinion to be unanimous that the text of the draft Convention was unsatisfactory, that it would tend to restrict rather than to promote freedom of information, and that the many failures in recent years to reach agreement internationally on the basic principles of freedom of information should be taken as convincing evidence of the impossibility, for the time being at least, of arriving at a generally acceptable text.

One of the main obstacles to agreement was the article in the draft Convention which set forth limitations on press freedom. This article permitted governments to restrict freedom of the press for a variety of reasons involving national security, defamation of reputation, literary rights and other matters. Many delegations considered that such an enumeration of limitations amounted to an open invitation to governments to impose or increase restrictions.

Recent consideration has also been given to a draft Convention on the International Transmission of News and the Right of Correction. The purpose of this Convention would be to implement the right of peoples to be fully informed. It dealt with specific questions connected with the transmission of news and laid down safeguards designed to guarantee certain basic freedoms to news correspondents and agencies. Under its terms, contracting states would have the right to issue corrections on news despatches which, in their opinion, were false or distorted and which might injure their relations with other states or damage their national prestige or dignity. The government of the country in which the despatch had been published would be obliged to release such corrections to the press and information agencies within its borders. At the fourteenth session of ECOSOC, France urged the adoption of a resolution which would have invited the General Assembly to open for signature that portion of the Convention which dealt with the right of correction. In this case, too, as in the case of the Convention on Freedom of Information, most members of the Council feared that the Convention would be likely to lead to rather than prevent abuses, and the French resolution was defeated by 9 votes against (including Canada), 5 in favour, with 4 abstentions.

The fourteenth session of ECOSOC also considered a revised draft of an International Code of Ethics, submitted by the Sub-Commission on Freedom of Information. This Code would establish a standard of professional conduct for journalists in such matters as accuracy, devotion to the public interest, responsibility and respect for confidences. Canada has never become closely associated with this proposal since, in the Canadian view, a code of this kind is largely a concern for professional journalists and should not be imposed by an inter-governmental body. The majority of Council