

The Canadian Government's stand on a federal state clause was reiterated in a statement submitted to the Secretary-General and published on March 10, 1954. It declared first, that "in the absence of a satisfactory Federal State clause, Canada could not become a party to the Covenants, due to the nature of its constitution which divides legislative powers concerning Human Rights between the national parliament and the provincial legislatures"; and second, that the Government appreciated the motives underlying the Commission's work but believed that the articles of the draft Covenants contained "many serious defects".

At its tenth session (February 23 - April 16) the Commission on Human Rights completed its work on the draft Covenants. After a full debate, during which the Australian Representative sponsored an effective federal state clause for the Covenants, the Commission finally adopted by a margin of one vote a Soviet draft article that would extend the provisions of the Covenants to all parts of federal states "without any limitations or exceptions". If this article remains in the Covenants, it will mean that federal states will not be relieved of obligations which it would be constitutionally impossible for them to undertake. The Commission, however, also voted to refer to the General Assembly the question of whether or not to include in the Covenants a general reservations clause permitting states to accede to the Covenants with reservations. Two proposals for draft articles on the right of petition were finally withdrawn, and a proposed article on the right to property was defeated.

At the same session, the Commission elected two members to fill vacancies on its Sub-commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, and requested ECOSOC to authorize annual meetings of up to six weeks duration for the Sub-commission. Continuation by the Sub-Commission of a study of discrimination in education was approved, and several recommendations made regarding the Sub-commission's programme of work. Action on the United States Human Rights Action Programme was postponed to the next session.

The report of the Commission on Human Rights is under discussion at the eighteenth session of ECOSOC and the subject will probably be debated again at the General Assembly in the fall of 1954.

## Slavery

Under the International Slavery Convention of 1926 (ratified by Canada on August 6, 1928) the signatories undertook to suppress the slave trade and bring about the complete abolition of slavery in all its forms. But the continuance of slavery and related practices is still a problem, and the Economic and Social Council in 1953 recommended that nations adhere to the 1926 Convention, that the United Nations take steps to assume the functions exercised by the League of Nations under it, and that the desirability of a supplementary convention be examined.<sup>1</sup>

On October 23, 1953 the General Assembly approved a Protocol transferring to the United Nations the functions exercised by the League of Nations under the 1926 Convention. Canada signed this

<sup>1</sup>See *Canada and the United Nations 1952-53*, p. 46.