

CANADIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

PRESS RELEASE NO. 89
December 12, 1966

Press Office,
750 Third Avenue,
New York 17, N.Y.,
YUkon 6-5740

International Covenants on Human Rights

Text of Statement made in the Third Committee by
the Canadian Representative, Professor R. St. John
Macdonald, in explanation of vote on Item 62
(International Covenants on Human Rights), Monday,
December 12, 1966.

My delegation has explained its votes on a number of previous occasions. Our position is well-known, and it is unnecessary for me to repeat at this time that we have sought to go to the limits of consensus in the continuing efforts by the United Nations to promote international concern for human rights and international co-operation for their advancement. We have sought wherever possible to widen as well as to deepen the involvement and commitment of the world community in the human rights area; and in our collaborative search for modern measures of implementation, my delegation has attempted to steer a middle course that would avoid, on the one hand, the rather routine conservatism of pro forma reporting and conciliation, and, on the other hand, the overly optimistic systems of compulsion that are beyond our reach at this stage of international relations.

We were rather disappointed, of course, that the Third Committee did not find it possible to agree to the acceptance of stronger measures of implementation, measures which, in our opinion, would have strengthened and improved the texts, and would have represented a slightly more forward position than that which we were finally able to reach. We were also disappointed over the imprecision and ambiguities which were allowed to insinuate themselves into some of the substantive articles, as well as the confusions and overlaps that were permitted to develop between a number of parallel articles within each covenant and between the two covenants themselves. These and related difficulties of a substantive as well as a formal nature will make it necessary for my

10/10/10

10/10/10

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

PHYSICS 439

PHYSICS 439

page two

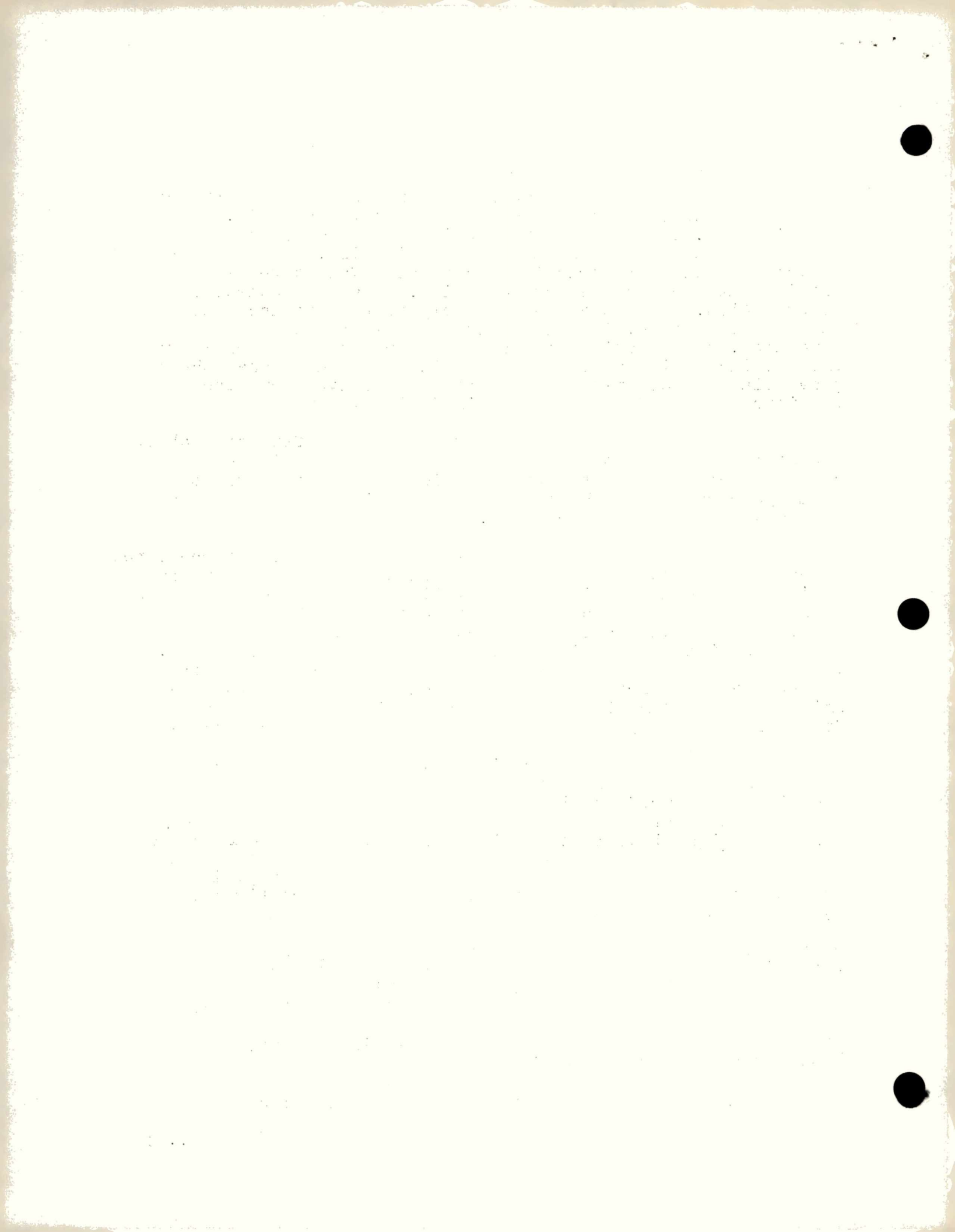
government to study the three instruments before us with great care before we can proceed to ratification. There is, additionally, the well-known constitutional consideration which concerns Canada in matters of this kind. Some of the articles of these international covenants fall directly within that field of competence which, under the Canadian constitution, is reserved exclusively to the provinces of Canada. Therefore, in considering its adherence to the covenants, the Canadian Government naturally will consult with the provinces with a view to obtaining assurances that the provincial authorities will be prepared to implement those provisions which fall within their jurisdiction.

Madame Chairman, I now wish to say a few words about the significance of the work which the Third Committee has completed at this Twenty-First Session, and of the gratitude of my government for the tact and skill with which you have presided over our deliberations.

It is the view of my delegation that the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Optional Protocol to the latter covenant, represent three of the most important instruments that have been elaborated in the human rights area since the end of the Second World War. In our opinion, these three great documents now take their proper place as part and parcel of that grand programme under which the United Nations has been promoting the ground rules for a wider and fuller life for all peoples the world over.

These documents provide deeper meaning and support to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. They identify and clarify basic values; they crystallize new thinking and attitudes to the human rights problem; and they provide a significantly new orientation and frame of reference for the United Nations itself. It is our opinion that from the moment of their adoption by the General Assembly, it will be incumbent upon the United Nations to work tirelessly for the wide acceptance of these documents and the effective compliance by members with their provisions. We attach particular significance to a continuing programme of publicity, because we believe that an important part of the need which we all recognize is to build up, throughout the world, an informed public opinion that will be capable of following and participating in the developing dialogue over human rights, a dialogue that these instruments are bound to evoke and intensify.

Madame Chairman, I have indicated the importance



which my delegation attaches to the two international covenants and to the optional protocol. We believe that these instruments will have a tremendous educational impact, and that they will set the tone and direction for the achievement of more civilized standards in the relations between man and man and between man and the State. I wish to conclude, Madame Chairman, by expressing to you the gratitude of the Government of Canada for the manner in which you have seen us through these difficult and exceedingly important debates.

Thank you, Madame Chairman.

