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INFORMATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS

Information activities form an integral part of the work of all Canadian diplomatic and consular posts abroad, although only four posts—London, New York, Paris, and Washington—have information officers who devote full time to this work. While the emphasis and the extent of information work vary from country to country, its principal objectives are to explain and to document Canadian foreign policies, to support and advance Canada's economic and cultural interests abroad, and to satisfy the genuine and increasingly lively interest which the people of other countries are showing in Canada and in Canadian life.

Within Canada the Department makes available current and background information on Canadian foreign policy, on international issues of concern to Canada, and on the work of the Department in general. The Press Office handles current enquiries from members of the press, arranges press conferences held in Ottawa by the Minister, issues and distributes press releases, and is usually in charge of public information arrangements for visits of heads of foreign states and other distinguished visitors. The Information Division deals with requests from the Canadian public for information pertaining to Canada's external relations, produces and distributes to interested organizations and individuals a variety of publications, and, on occasion, assists organizations to obtain speakers on international affairs. During 1954 closer and more effective liaison was established with the Information Division of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the wider dissemination in Canada of information relating to NATO was given particular attention. A special distribution list was set up and some 300 libraries, universities, organizations, and individuals are now being supplied with publications issued by the NATO Information Division in Paris as well as those issued by the Department. With the co-operation of provincial Departments of Education, two booklets on the organization and work of NATO were made available to high schools throughout Canada. Information arrangements in conjunction with the celebration of the fifth anniversary of NATO in April, and in connection with the Colombo Plan Consultative Committee meeting held in Ottawa during October, were co-ordinated by the Department.

The Department also continued to co-ordinate Canadian participation in the work of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, co-operating with federal and provincial agencies and with Canadian voluntary organizations in providing information requested by UNESCO, and in arranging for Canadian representation on UNESCO technical assistance missions and at seminars and conferences organized by UNESCO. A delegation of ten members represented Canada at the eighth General Conference of UNESCO held in Montevideo during November and December.