

Chapter 7

INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL RELATIONS

Public affairs at home and abroad

What people in other countries think about Canada and Canadians has an important effect on our international relations. Therefore one of the essential tasks of the Department of External Affairs is to try to increase public knowledge of Canada, especially among influential opinion makers in other countries. International cultural and academic relations stimulate interest in an attractive way, while information on the quality of life in this country serves to advance Canada's foreign policy and trade objectives.

Public affairs programs promote an image of Canada as a democratic, federal state, a reliable trading partner open to foreign investment, capable of developing and using sophisticated technology, a country with a unique cultural life rooted in its bilingual and multicultural heritage.

In Canada, too, the Department provides information to newspapers, radio and TV, for people and institutions with a special interest in foreign affairs and for the general public, in the hope that it will broaden public discussion on Canada's part in international affairs and increase public awareness of the Department's role and the services it provides for Canadians.

Cultural exchanges

Prestigious foreign institutions, galleries and festivals invited Canadian artists and performing arts companies to take part in their activities as a result of the Department's efforts to promote Canada's cultural achievements. This encouragement and facilitation of contacts between institutions in Canada and abroad has also brought a growing number of applications for travel grants from all sections of the arts community. During the year, Canadian performing groups toured Europe, the United States, Latin America, Asia and Africa under the Department's auspices. These groups included the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, which performed successfully for the demanding audiences in London, Amsterdam, Zurich and Vienna; Montreal's *Ligue nationale d'improvisation*, which was well received in France, Belgium and Switzerland; and the mime group, Theatre Beyond Walls, which toured Japan and was later invited back under commercial auspices. A number of major exhibitions were mounted, including one by the painter Riopelle at the Centre Pompidou in Paris; at London's new Barbican, "Contemporary Canadian Tapestry," which later toured Madrid, Germany and Denmark; and "O Kanada," a multi-media exhibition on Canadian culture at Berlin's *Akademie der Kunst*.

The biennial consultations with the Netherlands and the Federal Republic of Germany took stock of the ever-increasing cultural activities and sketched a framework for continuing development of Canada's cultural relations with the two countries. Canada has also lent its support to the Youth Exchange Initiative which the United States launched in the spring of 1982. This program seeks to increase youth exchanges among the seven Economic Summit nations.

The annual Joint Committee meeting with Belgium assumed more importance owing to Belgium's recent policy of regionalization which provided added incentive to enhance our cultural ties with the Flemish as well as the Walloon parts of the country. As a consequence of the 1981 meeting, the 1982 federal-provincial consultations on cultural policies helped consolidate the participation of provincial governments in the international cultural relations process.

Canadian studies

Encouragement of Canadian studies in foreign universities continued as an important element of the Department's academic relations program. Canadian studies associations in Australia, New Zealand and Ireland held their first conferences. The association in the United States took the major step of setting up a permanent office. The quality of participants in the graduate and post-doctoral awards program for foreign nationals of 17 countries was exceptionally good.

UNESCO

The world conference on cultural policy met in Mexico during July and August. The "Mexico Declaration" adopted a number of principles in the areas of cultural identity, development, heritage and international cultural co-operation. The Canadian delegation proposed two resolutions, one on the safeguarding of world heritage and a second on the ties between culture, information and communication. The conference adopted both resolutions. In November, in preparation for the next general conference, UNESCO convened a special general conference to study and revise the medium-term plan of activities for 1984 to 1989. Finally, Canada took part in the December meeting of the intergovernmental council's program for international communications development which set in progress a Third World aid program for technical co-operation. The UN proclaimed 1983 World Communications Year with the objective of developing and improving communications infrastructures all over the world.