

CO-ORDINATION OF CANADIAN POLICY AT THE UNITED NATIONS

In response to a request from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Secretary of State for External Affairs forwarded a special report on the formation of Canada's policy in United Nations matters. The text, which follows, may be of broad interest, since the processes it describes are similar to those followed in the shaping of Canada's foreign policies in other spheres.

Ever since the United Nations was established Canada has emphasized that, because of the autonomous character of each of the Specialized Agencies and because of the differences in the membership of the United Nations and the Agencies, effective co-ordination between the programmes, budgets and administrative practices of these organizations could be achieved only if each country took steps to ensure that its delegations to the meetings of the organizations pursued co-ordinated and mutually consistent policies. Such co-ordination on the national level is all the more necessary as the activities of the United Nations and its Agencies cover practically every aspect of the modern state's preoccupations and therefore involve, directly or indirectly, almost every department of national governments.

The essence of the Canadian system of government is the responsibility of the Cabinet to Parliament — and through Parliament to the Canadian people — for the policies of the Government on all national and international issues. Thus a study of the machinery for formulating, implementing and co-ordinating Canadian policy on United Nations matters, or indeed on any subject, must begin by emphasizing the paramount importance of the Canadian Cabinet. It is the chief instrument of co-ordination because it bears the ultimate responsibility for co-ordination. This is not to say that Cabinet alone can propose policy, or that Cabinet unaided must co-ordinate policy. Broad responsibility for proposing, interpreting, implementing, and co-ordinating policy, through procedures which are described in detail in the following paragraphs, is vested in the different government departments. The task of Cabinet is facilitated to the extent that consultation takes place and agreement is reached between interested departments before a submission to Cabinet is made. Cabinet's final responsibility however, cannot be delegated.

As the department of the Canadian Government entrusted with the conduct of foreign policy, the Department of External Affairs has general responsibility for Canadian relations with United Nations organizations. It exercises this responsibility in close co-operation with the other departments of the Canadian Government, the specialized functions and interests of which extend into the international field.

Allocation of Responsibility Among Departments

In respect of the recommendations of the United Nations on economic and social matters, the Department of External Affairs performs the following general functions:

- (a) it keeps the Government informed of major developments in the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies in order to enable it to assess the situation and determine the necessary action;
- (b) it formulates, either singly or with other departments, recommendations on policy for consideration by the Government;
- (c) it makes recommendations, either singly or with other departments, to the Government for Canadian representation at international conferences and for the briefing of Canadian delegations;