

VI. WHITE PAPERS

A. Federalism

The White Paper "Federalism and International Relations" published in 1968, and its supplement, "Federalism and International Conferences on Education", examined at some length the federal-provincial factor in Canada's external relations. In the course of doing so, the White Papers made frequent reference to the functions of the Department of External Affairs, to an extent that cannot readily be summarized. The following abbreviated version of the conclusions of the 1968 White Paper constitutes the basis from which the role of the Department of External Affairs vis-à-vis the provinces has evolved since that time:

"First, in official dealings with other countries, that is to say in the conduct of foreign relations in the strict sense of that term, only the Federal Government is empowered to act on behalf of Canada. This statement applies to the negotiation and conclusion of treaties and other international agreements, to membership in international organizations, and to the right to accredit and receive diplomatic representatives.

Second, despite the limitations of constitutional practice and international law, the provinces are legitimately concerned with the conduct of Canada's foreign relations, whether by reason of their legislative responsibilities or, less directly, because of their interest in matters which have taken on an international character in the modern world.

Third, French-speaking Canadians have a clear interest in ensuring that their preoccupations, like those of the English-speaking population, are given full recognition and expression in the development of Canadian foreign policy.

Fourth, extreme solutions to the problem of reconciling diverse interests within Canada, however plausible they may appear in isolation from our history and the needs of our people, would be to the disadvantage of Canadians as individuals, as well as to provincial, linguistic and cultural interests. Not only would they lead to the disintegration of the Canadian federation but little of lasting value would be gained in return, and much would be lost inasmuch as considerably less weight would be given by the international community to the views and policies of the smaller and weaker entities which would result. Further, they would lead to confusion and uncertainty as to the responsibilities and obligations which such entities could effectively discharge, and in all likelihood would be unacceptable to other sovereign states as they would entail the granting of excessive privileges to a divided "Canada".