

sovereign states. And they have been doing so more clearly. You just have to have a grasp of reality and of international law. In treaties, there are progressively fewer "federal" clauses, which allow for the transfer of sharing of sovereignty.

I might just mention the most recent example. Just six months ago, in April, the United Nations Conference on the Law of Treaties at Vienna rejected by an overwhelming majority a proposal which would have appeared to recognize, without being explicit about the conditions, a right on the part of members of a federal state to conclude treaties. This draft text was an argument used by the government of Quebec in its white paper as a supposedly irrefutable proof of the tendency towards an international capacity for members of a federation. This draft was clearly rejected simply because it ignored the factors which I have mentioned and did not reaffirm the exclusive right of the federal state to interpret its own constitution to other states. The Conference came to the conclusion that to adopt such an article would be to invite foreign states openly to interpret the constitution of federal states, which would constitute an intolerable intervention in their internal affairs. The Conference vigorously reaffirmed the principle that in a federal country only the government of that country can interpret its constitution to foreign countries. Whatever anyone may claim, therefore, international law has evolved and continues to evolve in a way which is clearly incompatible with the theory of the external sovereignty of provinces. This is a legal fact which simply reflects the fundamental requirements of any coherent international life. I shall come back to this.

(II) The international community would not accept the theory of a so-called external sovereignty for the provinces.

All these legal points have to be made. They provide a foundation for any discussion. However, I am primarily a practical politician. I should like to examine the theory of the external sovereignty of the provinces in the light of practical, daily experience with external affairs.

Like any other abstract conception, this theory can seem plausible. It has a defect, and a major one -- it is completely incompatible with the facts of international life. The international community simply cannot accept this theory from a practical point of view. For those who have an intimate knowledge of international relations, this formula appears dangerous, ineffective, incoherent, chaotic. I shall explain.

The concept of sovereignty has been greatly clarified over the last few years. It is high time for people to realize that, even if certain protectorates and trusteeship territories continue to exist, the notion of bodies with different degrees of international personality has almost disappeared, both in theory and practice. At present there is very little reason to expect that the international community will agree to go back to old conceptions of bodies which are half or partially sovereign, especially if such bodies seek to obtain separate membership in the United Nations or its agencies.