

been discussed in a tentative way. Practical procedures can be envisaged to deal with the problems of amendments and to ensure adequate access at posts.

191. Under the "Preferred System" sets of key documents and policy statements, as well as country data, are likely to be assembled on Microfiche. These would provide an ideal way to transmit selected relevant material to posts where control, storage and, on occasion, destruction would be greatly simplified. The possible conversion in Ottawa of institutional documents, (e.g. UN Specialized Agencies, NATO, GATT) to microfiche would make it possible for large amounts of such material to be held abroad with minimal strain on space. Such collections and the presence of the post viewer, or of a portable viewer, would be a great asset to delegations attending conferences, and of particular value for conferences held away from the headquarters of the institution concerned. The adoption of the microfiche technique in the Department would make it desirable to encourage international institutions to follow the same route. At present NATO does not appear inclined to do so but there is some thought being given to these problems within the U.N. family. If this were done the task of some of our posts of transmitting vast amounts of material to Ottawa could be considerably eased, and courier and airmail expenses substantially reduced.

#### Computer Usage Priorities

192. Existing computers in the Department have been installed to handle very specific tasks, such as the Passport and message switch computers. As a result there have been no conflicts regarding usage by other Divisions. The implementation of an information system catering to all four levels of need could alter this pattern. Such a prospect arises because the nature of the proposed system could result in the successful bid for equipment featuring a medium-scale general-purpose computer.

193. While accepting the demands of the substantive information system as the primary justification for the equipment to be installed, Treasury Board might well require a long-term rationalization of computer use within the Department. For example, some of the so-called "Independent Systems" identified in paragraphs 57 to 60 might be directed to share the use of the computer, and existing systems now run on outside machines might be pulled back in-house, to achieve some savings. Such an approach is indeed to be expected but it would bring with it a number of problems which have been experienced by most computer centres, and which should be identified and faced now.

194. As diverse systems from separate divisions of an organization are added to the workload of the same machine a jurisdictional problem arises as to responsibility for the machine itself. Frequently the solution for this has been to create a special computer systems division which reports to the head of either the financial or administrative branches. In profit-oriented organizations this has worked in the past, although the financial control aspects inherent in the management viewpoint found in these groups has sometimes inhibited beneficial systems growth in other operational areas. Current trends recognize the nature and importance of information systems and computer tools resulting in the creation of a Vice-President or Director-General of Information Systems. Although the scale of operations in the Department does not warrant completely embracing this latter approach, the concept is one which appears desirable to apply to some extent at least in the early stages of development of the "Preferred System".