

VI Resources: Personnel and Communications

Personnel

It is the special character of the work of the Bureau of Personnel that it touches the professional and personal lives of the Department's employees at every stage of their careers at home and abroad. It offers the first welcome and final farewell and, in between it has to respond with frequency and sensitivity to the myriad professional and personal concerns that arise from a career with a contemporary foreign service. Many of its functions are routine, while others are challengingly complex; this is perhaps inevitable when dealing with people working not only at headquarters but at posts throughout the world, people recruited and trained for long-term careers in a rotational foreign service, people with their families and belongings moving from post to post, whose varying needs must be looked after if they are to serve their country efficiently.

In 1975 there was a small increase in the number of persons employed by the Department, in response to increasing demands and the role played by External Affairs in the management and co-ordination of Canadian foreign operations. At the year's end the rotational component comprised 777 external affairs officers and 1,294 support personnel, of whom 450 officers and 865 support staff were serving at posts abroad; in addition, the Department employed approximately 2,300 locally-engaged staff at posts abroad. This staff provides support for the program activities abroad of all federal departments and agencies that undertake foreign operations. The non-rotational component at External Affairs headquarters included 1,040 officers and staff.

During 1975, the bulk of Bureau activity was focused on those customary personnel responsibilities that seldom vary, except in frequency and intensity, and constitute a continuing challenge to maintain the excellence and cheerfulness of a service that so closely affects every employee. Beyond this, the Bureau sought to improve the quality of its service and to respond to specific problems.

Career development is an important aspect of personnel management. In 1975 this program included a management-orientation course, designed to bridge the gaps faced by senior officers returning from assignment abroad to assume management roles and adapt to new techniques at headquarters. An advanced

French-language training program was inaugurated as part of the Bureau's continuing effort to help personnel improve their ability to work in either official language.

The Foreign Service Directives, which govern the terms and conditions of service abroad, were revised in 1975 in consultation with the staff associations to ensure that the provisions for personnel serving outside Canada were up to date. Periodic revision is necessary to ensure that foreign-service personnel receive the necessary support and assistance, and that terms of employment reflect, so far as possible, those of public servants in Canada.

In view of the particular requirements of the foreign service, employer-employee communications receive special attention. To this end, the Department and representatives of the staff associations formed during 1975 the External Affairs Joint Council, a labour-management committee that meets periodically to consult on matters relating to all aspects of employment in the Department.