

The Department of External Affairs has just released a film entitled "In Distress" concerning consular assistance for Canadians. The safety and welfare of Canadian citizens travelling or living abroad is a matter of concern to the Department and, through its consular offices abroad, the Department provides assistance to Canadians who encounter difficulties abroad. There are over two million valid Canadian passports in circulation, and it is anticipated that another half million will be issued this year. Thus, about one out of every ten Canadian citizen has made preparations for a foreign journey. Proportionately, Canadians are possibly foremost among travellers, perhaps because they are accustomed to travel great distances in Canada and perhaps because of the varied national origins of the Canadian population. Such international travel by Canadians is to be welcomed because it increases international perspectives and mutual international understanding which is an essential element in maintaining peaceful relations among states.

This year tens of thousands of Canadians will be travelling to many countries all over the world enriching their lives by the experience. Inevitably, however, some will encounter difficulties because of passports or money lost or stolen, because of sickness or injury, or for some other reason. Consular officers in Canadian Embassies, High Commissions and Consulates abroad are there to help them in these difficulties. Sometimes family and friends have urgent need to contact Canadians travelling abroad and if such travellers register with our offices abroad they can be located more quickly in such emergencies.

Some Canadians will find themselves in difficulty with the laws and regulations of the countries they are visiting. Canadian consular offices abroad can help Canadians in these difficulties also, but there are limits to what they can do, because Canadians are subject to the laws and regulations of the countries they visit, even though such laws are often quite different from those in Canada. Many such situations and all their attendant embarrassment and heartaches could be avoided, however, by travelling Canadians if they informed themselves more fully about the countries they plan to visit before leaving Canada. In this connection, the Department has prepared a short film entitled "In Distress" which is now available as a public service for showing on television and to audiences in schools, social groups and theatres. The situations it describes are actual and involve real people; its message is straightforward and simple -- "When you are in distress abroad help is available, but don't put yourself beyond help!"

It is hoped as many Canadians as possible, before they embark on their travels, will be able to see this film and profit from it.

Television stations, schools, groups, theatres, etc., which are interested in showing this film should contact the Film and T.V. Section of the Information Division of the Department of External Affairs: (613) 992-7218.