

always demand a heavy reliance upon current information, but the difference in use between working files and Registry files should be drastically reduced, since there should be no real difference in currency of material available from these two sources.

34. The one common time when desk officers turn to the Registry is at the beginning of a new desk appointment. Files may then be drawn from the Registry for browsing purposes in order to obtain the flavour of all the relevant subject matter. Nevertheless, reading the previous desk officer's diary copies was ranked as the more important orientation activity. Perhaps that is as it should be, but there were many complaints about the difficulty at this stage for the desk officer to obtain a more structured picture of policy statements, key documents and principal high-point events and activities from the background material of his new subject area.

35. In this question of ease of access and presentation of material, there has arisen an almost paradoxical situation. Many officers feel that too much information material passes over their desks. On the other hand, it is this stream of material which builds the general awareness of foreign affairs professionally required of the foreign service officer, and alerts him to a situation which may have relevance or implications in his own area of responsibility. Though essential, the sheer volume of paper is daunting. A Departmental information system which provides solutions for the other problems discussed should also form the basis for an eventual better control of the mass of material.

Management and Staff Roles

36. As one moves up through the staff to the management levels in the Department the same problems are still found which so exercise the desk officer group, but there is a change in emphasis. The implications and effects of decisions, and the professional experience of senior officers added to the detailed work carried out by desk officers, usually bring about satisfactory results in spite of the many impediments. The sum total of the thousands of decisions, events and activities with which the Department is engaged constitutes the expression of Canadian foreign policy. Departmental management recognizes that a major purpose is to direct this mass of activity so as to give effective support to the political position and philosophical attitude of the Government of the day. The multiplying Canadian interests abroad make this task increasingly difficult in two ways. Firstly, the very mass of information makes familiarity and selection more difficult and less encompassing. Secondly, analysis of the information is rendered difficult, since no adequate tools exist to support the effort required to identify, select and manipulate all relevant facts having a bearing on the situation. The formation of the Policy Analysis Group (PAG) reflects a recognition by management that such analysis is required, and the Country Programming exercise achieves a conjunction of policy objectives with the overall direction and effort expended in the conduct of Canada's foreign affairs.

37. Discussions with senior officers did result in some needs and desires being expressed in terms of possible solutions. For example, the possibility of selection of information and display for both individual and group use was discussed, with particular reference to telegrams. The need for data sets of key documents, already identified by desk officers, was given greater emphasis at more senior levels.