

Mr. Wrong: We always try to ensure that there is at least one Portuguese-speaking member on the staff and we encourage them to learn the local language when necessary. We have been fairly fortunate in that respect. The ambassador (Mr. Desy) in Brazil did not know any Portuguese until he was appointed.* Our ambassador in Moscow (Mr. Wilgress) speaks Russian and is rather an exception amongst the diplomatic corps there. If you had to limit your choice to those who could speak a certain language, you might find it very difficult, in the case for instance where a person was required to speak Yugoslav or modern Greek. You might find it very difficult to find such a person.

Mr. Fraser: But you find somebody who could help him to do it.

Mr. Wrong: We have a mission at Athens and we have with the ambassador there a gentleman as a special attaché who can speak modern Greek fluently.

Mr. Fraser: Do you try to pick members of the staff for these embassies who have a knowledge of the country that they go to; I mean, habits and manners of the people, so that they can get along better with them?

Mr. Wrong: We think the best way of acquiring knowledge of conditions is to send a junior member to the country in question and let them move around from post to post in order to spread knowledge among members of the service. So we try to move the junior members of the staff every three years on a rough average. For example, we have one junior officer who has been very nearly four years in Brazil and has learnt Portuguese who is now en route to Moscow. He happened to have some Russian before he joined our service. (1)

Members of Parliament were constantly curious about this knowledge of languages and raised the question both in the House and in Committee. In May, 1947, again, in the Standing Committee, Mr. Coldwell asked "How are we getting along with filling our posts in the various embassies, legations and so on, with people who can speak

* Mr. Desy studied diligently, and three weeks after his arrival in Rio de Janeiro, gave an address in Portuguese. Thereafter he became fluent.

(1) Minutes of Select Standing Committee on External Relations, October 25, 1945, p.8.