



## From the Foreign Service Community Association

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by Nancy Fraser

In early December the Foreign Service Community Association was pleased to be able to use the elegant facilities at the Department of External Affairs to hold a luncheon in the 9th floor dining room of the Pearson Building. This successful occasion, attended by more than 80 members, was held in honour of Mary Taylor, the wife of the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs. Mrs. Taylor, who was a foreign service officer before her marriage, spoke wittily and feelingly of her peripatetic life with five children in tow, contrasting conditions then and now most effectively.

An added fillip was the announcement by FSCA president Shirley Hadwen that after meeting with an Association delegation, Mr. Clark had announced the re-instatement of the spousal employment policy the day before. This information was greeted by delighted applause.

The view of the snowy Gatineau Hills contrasted with the scarlet flowers on each table as members caught up with each other's news. A frequently heard comment was that such gatherings should be held regularly to foster the community of the Association.

In order to maintain communication between management and those whose lives are so directly affected by its decisions, the FSCA executive meets regularly with representatives of various levels of the Department to discuss issues and concerns of particular interest to its members. In January those topics included the workshops and briefings to be offered this year and how they may be most responsive to the needs of foreign service members. One workshop planned for this year on coping with the needs of the elderly, was suggested by interest in a panel given in CONFERENCE '85 by the FSCA. At that time, the sessions on financial planning were particularly popular, so those who were unable to attend them will be pleased to see a workshop offered three times this year by the Posting Services Centre (ADTB) entitled Wills, Estate Planning and Financial Management. Among the workshops discussed were some to focus on the mutual support that can be shared by all the members of a caring foreign service community during transitions such as at times of posting and re-entry.

The FSCA was asked by Mr. Clark in November to re-examine the recommendations of the McDougall Royal Commission



Mary Taylor, guest of honour at the luncheon.

with a view to the implementation of those not already implemented or incompletely addressed. A committee is at work on that now preparing a brief for the Minister.

Since October an organization of military spouses called OSSOMM has been periodically in the news. Since the effects of the military lifestyle on employees and dependants in many ways parallel that of the foreign service, the executive has met with some of OSSOMM's leaders to discuss the relationship of the FSCA with External Affairs management and how it has evolved over the past ten years. OSSOMM is also very concerned with the rights and freedoms of military dependants and the Association supports the group in that task.

In order to prepare the brief on the re-instatement of the spousal employment policy in the fall, a telephone survey was taken to obtain up-to-date information. An impression was gained that there is a need for support for those who are undergoing marital separation in the foreign service. No one knows if the rate is higher among this group than in the general population; in fact this may be simply a sign of the times. However, trying to sort out two inter-twined lives while both members are literally thousands of miles apart must be, at least, more complicated. The FSCA is discussing this with management at the moment. If this is one of your concerns, please contact us so we can let you know if support groups have been formed, and who to contact for help and additional information.

In fact, if you have any concerns with this mobile life, join the FSCA and together we'll do our best to deal with them.

## FAMILY EMERGENCY KIT

by Dr. J.R. Leclerc, Zone Director located in Paris

Most Foreign Service families are familiar with the Public Service Health Clinic, Health and Welfare Department, at 301 Elgin Street in Ottawa where they submit to a pre-posting medical examination.

During those interviews depending on their destination, they are given advice on how to best maintain their health in their new posting. This includes advice on immunizations and also on hygiene and food, especially for those destined for tropical countries.

Those suffering from chronic illnesses for which they are taking regular medication, are advised to bring with them a stock of at least six months. This will provide them with the necessary period after their arrival to find out if the same medication, or its equivalent, is available at their new residence. If it is not, they can order it from Ottawa, with the help of Health and Welfare, and receive it before their original stock is exhausted.

There is, however, another medical component that can be of great help to rotational families but is probably not mentioned because it seems so obvious.

Every Canadian household should have, and maintain up-to-date, a small "Emergency Kit" that serves as their individual "Black Bag". Before departing Canada this kit should be completely replenished with over-the-counter medication that the family is familiar with and that can be used in case of minor emergencies. This could save a lot of worry at a post where the medication known to you might not be available, or where you are not confident or familiar with the medication that is offered to you.

Most minor emergencies befalling the family will happen around the home. So it is most important that your "black bag" (meaning any container that can store all your medication) be in your home — but not in your bathroom. That is the worst place to store medication. Humidity and heat will destroy or adulterate drugs and most bathrooms are moist and warm. So keep your emergency medication kit in a dry room of your house.

In this kit, you should have a First-Aid book, a list of emergency phone numbers and equipment and supplies depending on the particular needs of your family.

Canadian pharmacists can help in recommending the components of the usual medications that could respond to the most usual emergencies. I hope these few lines might serve in keeping you healthier and happier in your post.