

committee is also mentioned. But the SSEA only happens to be a member of the latter committee; he is not so automatically, and the next Minister may not be included. Central-agency status would seem logically to require that relevant policy decisions for Cabinet approval be handled by a committee in which the Department enjoys a *primus inter pares* advantage, the leverage of chairmanship. In Priorities and Planning, the Minister's "clout" is more political than departmental, which does little to support the central-agency claim.

Regarding his own role, the Under-Secretary believes that his most important responsibility is that of making recommendations for heads of post. Although assisted by ICER, he alone has that responsibility, he avers, and some of the posts are the equal of deputy ministers in scope. The problem about this assertion is that it focuses on recommendation, not nomination, and Prime Ministerial appointment of the occasional political colleague for an overseas post detracts from the central-agency argument.

#### Committees

The Under-Secretary is chairman of three interdepartmental committees. The one concerned with Third World relations, the Interdepartmental Committee on Economic Relations with Developing Countries, has existed for five years in comparative obscurity. A 1978 creation, the Committee of Deputy Ministers on Foreign Policy, is much broader in scope, and is a forum for discussing almost any policy issue with international implications. If this committee becomes a channel for resolving interdepartmental differences in a manner consistent with External's perceptions, it will certainly enhance the central-agency case. But, if, on the tough issues, the key departments continue to go their own ways, the central-agency claim will not have been forwarded. It is, however, one of the two real steps the Under-Secretary has taken towards central-agency status. The

other step was taken in the third committee he chairs, ICER — the move already described to take support-staff integration forward to include the head of post's line authority over all programs, and dual accountability to the SSEA and to the home-program department.

A possible third step towards central-agency status, one taken prior to the Under-Secretary's assumption of office, has also been mentioned. This was the allocation to the SSEA of the authority to approve and make recommendations to Cabinet on the size and composition of delegations to international conferences. The Cabinet directive did not cover technical meetings, general official travel or unofficial deliberations, otherwise known in Orwellian jargon as non-conferences. As for meetings in Canada, other departments are more likely to reveal that they are expecting overseas visitors, who may well not pass unnoticed, but the same does not apply to visiting American officials.

In 1972, External Affairs was assigned responsibility for ensuring co-ordination of the external aspects and applications of national policy. The functionally-originating department was supposed to notify External of any program with external content or aspects, but, inadvertently or otherwise, sometimes failed to do so. Since the most frequent omissions were in the area of Canadian-American relations, a further and more specific Government guideline was issued in 1974 to try to stop issues with Canadian-American implications from reaching Cabinet without prior consultation with External Affairs. Throughout much of the decade, therefore, the Department was obviously not viewed as a central agency from which other departments had to seek clearance before carrying through those functional programs that happened to have incidental external aspects.

The limitation of co-ordination as a central-agency tool is that it is dependent on co-operation and persuasion. Unless the responsible body

stipulated has the power to ensure compliance, not merely with the outward forms of co-ordination but with the policy implications of its direction and leadership, then its formal obligations and responsibility with respect to other departments may be purely nominal.

The Under-Secretary affirms that the Department's means of exercising its authority distinguishes External Affairs from other central agencies. Treasury Board controls the budget expenditures for all Government departments; it establishes the administrative policies of the Government as an employer: "Government departments and agencies do not have a choice whether to go through Treasury Board." The USSEA might have said the same of the PCO, the guardian of the gates to Cabinet. No department can circumvent the Treasury Board and the PCO, but departments can extend minimal co-operation to External Affairs without following its leadership and without suffering severe consequences as a result. The Treasury Board and the PCO have something to offer or hold back that is considered valuable to regular departments; External does not.

All three are concerned with a spectrum of policy issues broad enough to qualify them as central agencies; all three have the requisite co-ordinative responsibilities; but only two enjoy the powers of control necessary to ensure successful discharge of those responsibilities. The power to control is a crucial lever in the weaponry of a central agency. What distinguishes External Affairs is not the difference in methods of exercising central-agency authority but the absence of the authority required to ensure that it consistently acts as a central agency.

External Affairs falls comfortably into that slightly larger group of departments and agencies known as the traditional "horizontal co-ordinative portfolios". These departments have high policy influence owing to the frequency of their opportunities to intervene in policy