

□ INTERVIEW □

One of the disadvantages of being a head of mission and unmarried is that you have to be both breadwinner and housewife. While I'm receiving a delegation at my office, I have to be sure that the flowers are arranged properly at home.

S. G.: Is that because you are unmarried or because you are a female Ambassador?

J. L.: I think people expect a woman to take care of her home. You have to find ways of doing so. It's a dimension that forces us to split ourselves in two.

S. G.: If you don't mind my saying so, that's a rather traditional outlook...

J. L.: Diplomacy is traditional: guests expect sterling silver and fine china.

S. G.: You would have the same problem if you were a bachelor.

J. L.: Absolutely, but it's a matter of perception. Because you are a woman, people assume that you will take better care of your home.

S. G.: Women are often said to be relegated to subordinate tasks. Have you gotten that impression at External Affairs?

J. L.: In North America, most subordinate positions, to use your expression, are filled by women. That is one of the main reasons why women's salaries are only 50% or 60% of men's. External Affairs is the same as the rest of our society, and I admit I do not know what the male/female ratio is among administrative support staff. As far as career

diplomats are concerned, the major problem is with promotion. Perhaps promotions should be accelerated so that there are more young women at the intermediate level. Of course, more and more women are being recruited, and ten years from now we probably will have struck a better balance.

S. G.: How do you see your new role?

J. L.: The fact that I am a woman does not really change my perception of the position. I am doing what any of my colleagues would do under the same circumstances: studying our relations with Spain and all related matters. My new responsibility is, first and foremost, to represent my country. That means being on duty 24 hours a day.

But there is no denying that comments are sometimes made about us (women). I recently met some Europeans who said, "Oh, so they're appointing women now." I could have interpreted that as meaning that they thought there had been a drop of quality, but I did not. It is easy to get over little incidents like that.

S. G.: Do those comments bother you?

J. L.: Not at all. It just means that I have to do an excellent job so that they no longer even notice that I am a woman, but think of me first as the Canadian Ambassador.

S. G.: So that means you must first establish your credibility, something you would not have to do if you were a man.

J. L.: You are probably right but there is nothing I can do about it, that's the way

things are. I am not making any special effort. I want to be on top of the issues anyway. I am not doing it to prove anything. I am not making any superhuman efforts to establish my credibility.

S. G.: Ms. Loranger, is there anything you would like to add?

J. L.: I would like to say that I realize I am one of only a few Canadian women in this position, and given the importance Canada attaches to the issue of promoting the status of women at the international level, I feel that it is my responsibility to put that message across in the country where I am going — and what I am about to say may sound somewhat ambitious — in order to help women there to move into positions to which they would normally have trouble gaining access. I am very much aware of the fact that I will be representing my country and I hope that my work will be worthy of Canada and represent its interests well □