

□ INTERVIEW □

Already five years have elapsed since the McDougall Commission on Conditions of Foreign Service released its report. Since then what has happened? Liaison discussed the subject with Pamela McDougall.

Sylvie Gauvin: *Could you briefly describe your career in the Foreign Service?*

Pamela McDougall: I trained and worked as a research chemist before writing the Foreign Service exam. I tried it twice and passed the second time. I was posted in Germany, Vietnam, India and in Poland as Ambassador from 1968 to 1971. After Poland, I spent three years in the Privy Council Office and two years with the Economic Bureau in External. I left the Foreign Service in 1976 for family reasons. Subsequently I served as Chairman of the Tariff Board and as Deputy Minister for Health and Welfare. I finished my 35 years in the public service with the Royal Commission on Conditions of Foreign Service and retired on the date I submitted my Report. That was almost five years ago.

S. G.: *What do you think the priorities in such a Report would be now, five years later?*

P. McD.: I think the priorities have probably not changed since 1981. I don't need to be on the spot to know that spouses' problems have not been totally solved, but then you could never expect them to be solved overnight. An arrangement where the two persons involved in a relationship are both employees of External, that is the ideal arrangement, if any arrangement can be ideal.

S. G.: *Do you think that the situation has changed since the publication of the Commission's Report?*

P. McD.: I think that if other circumstances were not what they are today, it would be just about time for them to do a real review of what was accomplished, in terms of what the Report dealt with, during the past five years. The trouble is that they have been busy enough with other difficulties — financial, re-organization etc...

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S. G.: *Do you think that these other difficulties are the real reason for delay? like budget cuts, for instance?*

P. McD.: They are not necessarily the real reason, but they can be used as a perfect excuse, and a perfectly valid excuse. My own experience of the Department is that it has never enjoyed the state of calm and order-

liness necessary to do the sort of thing that any organization should do; that is, to take time to analyse what has been done and evaluate the results. I'm thinking about operation policy or personnel policies. The way you treat your staff and so forth.

S. G.: *Is the Report still up to date?*

P. McD.: Well, I don't think anything in this rapidly changing world can be up to date. Parts of it are bound to be out of date within six months of publication. The generalities are probably not out of date. The broad conclusions about foreign service are probably not out of date.

I would guess that the same horrible headaches on policy, on organization, on career development, or on anything else are no worse now than in 1981.

S. G.: *When a Commission is appointed it is because there is need for an in-depth examination; people are concerned about perceived problems. Do you think that need was fulfilled, the problems solved, or the questions answered in the Report on Conditions of Foreign Service?*

P. McD.: I certainly hope that many questions were answered. We tried to cover things in as much depth as possible in the time available.

Personally, I consider the Report as a document which looked at the situation surrounding a government department at a particular point in time. It looked at the historical background;