

TRADE COMMISSIONER

Continued from page 1

imperatives," specialization and the more traditional generalist approach to being a trade officer. On the one hand, the increasing complexity of trade-related matters seems to call for a more in-depth knowledge of particular geographical or linguistic regions or of particular areas of economic and technological importance than the traditional rotational cycle between widely-varying assignments provides. On the other hand, "except for a small handful of posts abroad, there simply aren't enough trade commissioners around to have one investment development officer and one technology development officer at the same mission." In this sense, trade commissioners will continue to be jacks-of-all-trade (pun intended).

Brian conceded that linguistic specialization would probably become a permanent feature of the TCS, given the tremendous investment required for language training. Brian also mentioned the importance of improving the level of technological familiarity in the Department. According to Brian, "About 15% of the trade officers in the Department have science or technology backgrounds, and this underestimates things because many others are technologically-

literate or can absorb such principles quite well." Brian characterized the ideal trade commissioner as a "highly adaptive generalist." He also stated the importance that the TCS attaches to the continuing education of its officers and his expectation that the Canadian Foreign Service Institute would be an invaluable tool in upgrading their knowledge and skills.

For the year ahead, the Chief Trade Commissioner sees several main thrusts. First and foremost are the celebrations of the TCS Centenary, and the opportunities they provide for reacquainting ourselves with the needs and requirements of our clients in the business community.

Also important is the implementation of the MI/I strategy for the TCS - especially in terms of how intelligence will be obtained and how it will be efficiently disseminated. One item of particular importance to the Chief Trade Commissioner is the major upgrade of the WIN Exports system that is currently being undertaken. WIN Exports is the microcomputer-based information system that matches Canadian products and services with those sought by potential importers around the world. According to Brian, "WIN Exports has the

potential to be the most powerful tool in the trade commissioner's repertoire... If all trade commissioners made an effort to continually update the WIN Export files every time they have dealings with a particular company, within the space of a few years, we will have a tremendous base of basic and transaction information that will form part of our corporate memory and an invaluable tool for future decision-making and analysis."

The key words for the Trade Commissioner Service, then, are change and information. On the latter point, the Chief Trade Commissioner hopes that this newsletter will provide an informal means for trade officers to exchange ideas and share tricks of the trade (again, pun intended). Brian emphasized the fact that the newsletter belongs to all trade staff, and all trade staff should make an active effort to contribute their experience and knowledge to the collective memory of the TCS via the newsletter. And not just trade commissioners, but all staff interested in trade should both contribute and learn from the newsletter.

As Brian said, "The trade commissioner who is working alone is working with one hand tied behind his or her back."

AT YOUR SERVICE: *A message from the Editor*

Many of us in the TCS have called for an internal newsletter to provide a forum where we can exchange ideas. The recent creation of a Foreign Operations Unit in TOO has given the opportunity to produce such a publication.

Here is what we plan will be a very informal (and strictly unofficial) quarterly newsletter. We welcome brief accounts of any initiatives you feel could be adapted by your colleagues for use elsewhere. We all know

our common challenges; what we want are the imaginative approaches you have used to meet them. By sharing good ideas, we can strengthen the TCS team.

You may not recognize the names of many of our "reporters" since we have often selected new officers to conduct interviews so they can bring a fresh perspective to their topics. To really succeed, however, this newsletter needs your involvement so let's hear from you.

Mike Spencer