
Professional gold medallists

The Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada has awarded its 1977 Gold Medals to Dr. V.E.F. Solman of the Canadian Wildlife Service, and to Clarence W. Powell, chairman of the Board of Commissioners of Public Utilities for the province of Newfoundland.



Dr. V.E.F. Solman

Dr. Solman was honoured for his contribution to the field of pure or applied science; Mr. Powell for his work in other fields of endeavour contributing to national or international well-being.

Dr. Solman, a native of Toronto, served with the Federal Government from 1942 to 1945 in charge of weather forecasting and meteorological training for Royal Air Force Transport Command Training. In 1945 he joined the Dominion Wildlife Service (which became the Canadian Wildlife Service in 1947), since when he has held various positions in disciplines such as limnology, wildlife classification, research on bird hazards to aircraft and environmental-impact assessment.

His most outstanding work has been first as a member of the Associate Committee on Bird Hazards to Aircraft, National Research Council since 1964, and then as its chairman since 1973. His contribution to the prevention of bird strikes with aircraft on the basis of his knowledge of habitat manipulation, bird behaviour and other biological phenomena was essential to the resolution of the problem. This contribution has received international acclaim. (See *Canada Weekly*, Vol. 5, No. 41, October 12, 1977.)

Clarence Powell has been a public servant in Newfoundland for 42 years during which he has served in three senior posts.

For most of the time when Newfoundland was governed by a Commission of Government (1934-1949) he was a magistrate with primary responsibility for providing liaison between the Government and the citizens of the two districts to which he was assigned. His principal achievement in this post was the promotion of municipal government which at the time existed only in the city of St. John's.

In 1947, Mr. Powell was appointed Director, Local Government Affairs, and after Confederation was made Deputy Minister, Municipal Affairs. In this post he organized municipal councils in the majority of towns with populations in excess of 1,000 and community councils in smaller settlements. He was also chairman of the Provincial Planning Board, which promoted and supervised municipal plans.

In 1964 he was made permanent chairman of the Board of Commissioners of Public Utilities. He was primarily responsible for the extension of a high quality of telecommunication services to the entire territory of Newfoundland Telephone Company Limited on the Island of Newfoundland and to all of the permanent settlements in Newfoundland Labrador.

Federal Ombudsman to be created

Justice Minister Ron Basford recently announced his intention to bring forward legislation early this year to establish a federal Ombudsman for Canada.

As an independent officer of Parliament, the Ombudsman would be empowered to investigate complaints about administrative actions or inactions from members of the public who have not received satisfaction through the normal departmental complaint-handling channels. Like his counterparts in the provinces and New Zealand and Australia, the Ombudsman would, if necessary, report to Parliament when his recommendations were not followed. His jurisdiction would extend to all departments and most agencies of the Federal Government and, to avoid confusion, would be stipulated by schedule to the Ombudsman Act.

Mr. Basford drew attention to committee recommendations that the Ombudsman be empowered to take up complaints received directly from the public. This is the practice followed in the provinces, New Zealand and Australia and is in contrast to what is done in Britain and in

France, where parliamentarians are obliged to act as intermediaries between the public and the Ombudsman.

Co-ordination with others

Mr. Basford noted that care would be taken to avoid overlapping and unnecessary expenditure among complaint-handling bodies, by having the Privacy Commissioner and the Correctional Investigator (both of whom serve ombudsman-like functions) become assistant ombudsmen, empowered to deal with complaints in their particular functional areas.

He noted that certain bodies created to oversee statutory rights, such as the Commissioner of Official Languages and the Canadian Human Rights Commission, would not be integrated into the office of the Ombudsman. Although the former office has ombudsman-like powers in respect of language complaints, it also has an important duty which goes far beyond this — that of ensuring recognition of the status of each of the official languages.

Similarly, the function of the Canadian Human Rights Commission goes beyond general complaint-handling to encompass the administration and enforcement of quite specific rights as defined in the Canadian Human Rights Act. The Commission has the authority to refer complaints of illegal discrimination to tribunals having the power to issue binding orders; the Ombudsman, on the other hand, will deal with complaints alleging maladministration (generally involving alleged incompetence or inefficiency but not illegality) by departments and agencies of the Federal Government itself and will not have the power to enforce his findings.

The only complaints in which the Ombudsman and the Canadian Human Rights Commission could both become involved would be those alleging maladministration on the part of the latter or discrimination on the part of the former. Such complaints are expected to be rare. Nevertheless, since there will be instances where a person will complain to the wrong body, administrative arrangements will be made to refer complaints to the proper office.

Michel de Goumois has been named Deputy Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs. The Department said Jacques Gignac would be an Assistant Under-Secretary. Gilles Mathieu of Montreal has been appointed Minister in the Washington Embassy.