

Personnel

External Affairs is the department whose activities cover the largest geographical area. External's Canadian operations, including those at headquarters in Ottawa and at six regional passport offices, require the services of 2,002 employees. In addition to the personnel working inside Canada, 1,345 Canadians and 2,373 local employees serve at 125 posts in nearly every corner of the globe. So widespread an organization, with the consequent diversity of its activities, imposes heavy - and often unique - demands on a personnel system.

The 1977 work of the Personnel Bureau will serve to illustrate this point. For example, with the other foreign-service departments, the Bureau continued to ensure that its cross-Canada recruiting process found the candidates best qualified for a rotational career. The staffing of foreign missions involved 872 postings from headquarters to posts and between posts. The operation of an appraisal and promotion system for employees regularly on the move to all parts of the world required the convening of more than 40 committees and boards composed of over 120 officers and support staff. The preparation of employees for foreign assignments involved many kinds of training, much of it unique to this Department; this included courses for some 336 employees in Canada and abroad in over 30 languages. The Bureau also organized several seminars on the practical and psychological problems of retirement. Finally, to ensure fair and reasonable conditions for employees working abroad, often in circumstances very different from those prevailing in Canada, the Bureau provided a good deal of assistance in a number of areas that are not usually the concern of an employer (e.g., education, accommodation, medical care, transportation, etc.).

So comprehensive a system must obviously be flexible enough to cope with changing conditions and expectations, both at home and abroad. Among the important developments and innovations in a number of areas in 1977 was a review of the promotion-and-appraisal system for support staff. Two new programs were introduced to provide greater opportunity for the

advancement of support staff into the officer groups - including an intradepartmental competition at the FS-1 level and an Officer-Specialist Development Program. For officers, a new training program was introduced to provide better preparation in public affairs. The first steps were taken towards the introduction of a career-streaming process to encourage Foreign Service Officers to focus their attention on fewer areas of departmental operations than in the past. In 1977 significantly-increased resources, embodied in a Human Resources Planning Section, were devoted to planning in the personnel area, and in particular to increasing emphasis on the Equal Opportunities Program. Consultations were held with other departments in order to design an efficient and equitable system for paying the bilingual bonus to rotational foreign-service personnel.

The Department continued to ensure that the benefits of the Foreign Service Directives were appropriately provided to all its employees, and it also provided certain administrative services to employees of other departments on posting abroad. Changes were introduced into the official hospitality system. While continuing to provide assistance to employees and their families in a wide range of personal concerns, the Bureau stepped up its efforts to develop a departmental policy to combat alcoholism. Numerous labour-management committee meetings were held during the year on all aspects of the Bureau's responsibility for administering more than a score of collective agreements.

Finally, while the Department's general mandate in foreign operations was preserved, efforts were made to relate the activities of the foreign-service community to those of the Ottawa-based Public Service as a whole.