

ICER and its two-year search for an approach to integration

By J. R. Maybee

In the first part of the Foreign Policy Review published in June 1970, the Government announced its decision that "there should be maximum integration in its foreign operations that will effectively contribute to the achievement of national objectives". To further this purpose, the Government established the Interdepartmental Committee on External Relations (ICER). The committee, which was set up at the deputy-minister level under the chairmanship of the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, was given the responsibility "for guiding the process of integration during its initial phases and for advising the Government on such matters as the formulation of broad policy on foreign operations, the harmonization of departmental planning with the Government's external interests, the conduct of foreign operations, the allocation of resources for those operations". The Committee and its companion body the Personnel Management Committee — a subcommittee of ICER — held their first meetings in July 1970, and have been meeting at irregular intervals since that time.

The Interdepartmental Committee on External Relations and the program it was assigned to carry out had their origin in a study commissioned by the Government in 1969. An interdepartmental task force under the chairmanship of S. D. Pierce, a retired ambassador with a distinguished record of foreign service, was directed by the Government to "study and report" on all the operations abroad of the Federal Government, with a view to the maximum degree of integration that would be con-

sistent with the most effective achievement of the Government's objectives and to examine the administrative areas of Government operations abroad to determine where savings might be achieved or efficiency improved. This task force produced its report in March 1970. The report, in turn, was studied by an *ad hoc* committee of senior officials on Government organization (a group that included the Secretary to the Cabinet, the Secretary to the Treasury Board, the Chairman of the Public Service Commission, the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs and the Deputy Minister of the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce) and this committee submitted its findings to the Cabinet. The Cabinet took its decision on the report in May 1970 and announced the main points of its decision in *Foreign Policy for Canadians*, which was published in June 1970.

In *Foreign Policy for Canadians* the principal objective of the assignment to the Interdepartmental Committee on External Relations may be identified in the statement that "the Government needs a strong and flexible organization for carrying out its reshaped foreign policy". It is significant that, while the Government went on to identify its purpose as "maximum integration in its foreign operations", the purpose was qualified with the phrase "that will effectively contribute to the achievement of national objectives"; this has left to the committee of deputy ministers the problem of deciding for purposes of recommendations to the Cabinet exactly what degree of integration would be most effective for the conduct of Canada's foreign operations.

It is significant that the Government spoke of the need for a "strong and flexible organization" in the singular. At the time when the ICER was established, there were approximately 1,880 Canadian and 2,228 locally-engaged employees of some 22 departments, boards, agencies and other organizations of government appointed or employed at 115 locations in 69 countries

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