

2. WORKLOAD PATTERNS

An assessment of the potential benefits of new procedures and equipment in Port of Spain must necessarily relate these benefits not only to the inadequacies of the existing facilities and systems but also to the overall problems faced by the Immigration program at the post. Unless this is done, there is a real danger that improvement efforts will be directed at achieving only modest productivity gains while more significant problems remain unresolved.

Despite the brevity of the team's visit to Port of Spain it became clearly evident that one major factor, apart from procedures and equipment, has a significant bearing on the post's Immigration operations. This factor is the cyclical pattern of the program's annual caseload. Each year (between roughly June and October) the processing of immigrant cases is disrupted by the influx of student and temporary worker applications. Because these visitor applications impose deadlines by which visas must be issued, they are generally given priority over immigrant cases. The effect of this change in priorities is to slow down the processing of current immigrant cases and to delay the commencement of new applications during this period. By late September or early October, therefore, when processing of immigrant cases can again be accelerated, the volume of the accumulated backlog tends to overwhelm the available resources at each stage of the process as the backlog works its way through the system. Moreover, because of the extensive delays experienced by immigrant applications, the volume of work is increased