

will call for the capacity to take a sensitive and responsive approach at the operational level, and to demonstrate the means to deal in depth with policy issues.

27. The conduct of the survey itself appeared to have a beneficial effect in some quarters in generating thought about how individuals will have to respond to changes in established procedures. Hopefully, the survey will have commenced the process of conditioning the membership of the Department to the need to overcome inertia in order to realize the full potential of any future information system.

Work Approach and Attitudes Among Members of the FS Group

28. The study was welcomed by foreign service officers at all levels, both at home and abroad, who almost without exception expressed serious dissatisfaction about current shortcomings. Since the flow and retention of information is of prime importance to them in carrying out their duties they demand consistent, high-quality support in this sector. This is particularly true because of the way substantive issues are handled in the Department. It is quite normal for material generated by desk officers to rise to the highest levels in virtually original form. The more senior officers bring not necessarily more detailed knowledge to bear on the material but a more experienced view from a vantage point also giving a wider horizon. In large measure, reliance is placed upon the general professional capabilities of the experienced officers and the detailed leg-work of the junior officers. While this usually works owing to the competence of personnel, the weakness of the Registry could some day soon cause an incident of serious embarrassment to the Department. This weakness results from a combination of rotational service and the poor identification of material stored in Departmental files. Although the formal institutional memory in the shape of files goes back many decades, the quality of subject identification varies so much as to be very unreliable for retrieval. The informal memory of the Department which resides in the heads of the FS Group is, in some ways, much better but suffers from its own form of unreliability. For example, the officer who dealt with a similar or relevant situation to one at issue, or who was present at the beginning of a problem may literally be at the end of the world, may no longer be in the service, may be forgotten, or simply ignored. In this way important facts or documents can be and are overlooked instead of making their contribution to a good solution.

29. Although these facts are recognized and lamented, operational pressures frequently preclude the expenditure of time necessary to await an effective response from the Registry, or to carry out an extensive browse through many volumes of files. In the absence of any certainty of finding all the relevant material officers often feel discouraged from embarking on such effort and, if the right material cannot be found, information regarding the identity and current whereabouts of the previous desk officer for consultation is not easily come by.

30. As would be expected, as each successively higher level in the Department is examined, the frequency of use of subject files is found to diminish. Working material tends more to be the 'product' (e.g. memoranda to Minister/Cabinet, policy statements, briefing books, etc.) in various stages of completion,