

CANADA'S FOREIGN SERVICE

THE DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

The day has long since passed when Canada and Canadians could ignore developments in the world outside our borders, when our representative at the League of Nations could say: "We live in a fireproof house far from any conflagration!" Today, when decisions at the United Nations or the North Atlantic Council may affect us as much as debates in our own Parliament, when developments at a meeting of European Common Market countries may influence our economic future no less than developments at a Federal-Provincial conference, we cannot afford to be uninformed about the affairs of other nations which may so quickly have important effects upon our own. We must have the means both to protect and to promote Canadian interests in other countries and in international organizations: these are responsibilities of the Canadian Foreign Service.

The Department of External Affairs has three main purposes: to provide information and advice to the Government on issues of foreign policy; to influence foreign governments and peoples to act favourably towards Canadian interests; and to provide services to Canadian travellers and foreign citizens abroad.

In order to fulfill these duties, the Department has over 80 offices abroad, including 58 embassies and high commissions which, taking into account dual accreditation, conduct our relations with 97 countries. Most of the staff at our posts abroad are Canadians, members of Canada's Foreign Service, as are all of the officers and staff working in the Department's headquarters in Ottawa.

The work of an embassy may roughly be broken down into four categories: political and economic, consular, information and public relations, and administration. The precise nature of any of these will vary with the size of our mission and the nature of the country to which it is accredited. With some countries, Canada has a great deal of business, and the political and economic work will involve the negotiation of agreements and the discussion of a wide variety of policies and problems. With some countries, we have a particularly close working relationship within the United Nations, the Commonwealth or NATO, and there will be a number of policy problems connected with these organizations to be discussed. In each country where the Canadian Government has some interest in internal and foreign policy developments, political and economic reporting is important.

Consular work involves protecting and assisting Canadian citizens in other countries. With passports being issued to Canadians at a rate of up to 6,000 a week at the peak of the season, more Canadians are travelling abroad than ever before. For most of them, the nearest Canadian embassy or consulate is the only place to which they can turn for help. They may be in hospital, have lost money and passports, be involved in an automobile accident or a lawsuit, or be in trouble with the local authorities. In each of these cases, and many more, it is the responsibility of the Embassy's Consular Section to give such assistance as may be appropriate.

An embassy is also responsible for Canada's information and cultural exchange programme in the country to which it is accredited. This includes distribution of films and other information material, press relations, participation in trade fairs and other commercial or artistic exhibitions, arrangements for tours of leading Canadian artists, administration of scholarship programmes and, in general, the projection of Canada to the people of other countries.