

Introduction

Today, as seldom before, the impact of Canadian policies and activities is being felt in the United States. Public interest and public uneasiness have mounted because of the energy problem and a host of highly sensitive actions. These include the barring of the Taiwan athletes from the Montreal Olympics, the curtailing of the Canadian operations of Time and the Reader's Digest, and the blackout of U.S. television commercials north of the border.

The cliché that Americans do not care much about Canada is less valid, but it is still true that Americans know very little about modern Canada, its government, economy, and culture.

This is not to say that the U.S. media carry nothing about Canada. Many newspapers are, in fact, searching out such material and the appetite seems to be growing on what it feeds -- not necessarily the best food. Summing up the problem, Alan K. Henrikson of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, said: "To question the American man-on-the-street about his knowledge of Canadiana, as was recently done by an interviewer of the Boston Globe, is to expose an embarrassing want of specific information. Such particular facts as respondents do produce... are likely to be trivial and superficial... Profound and lasting interest in Canada, based upon a solid foundation of prior knowledge and understanding, is rare among Americans, even those specializing in the study of international affairs."

The need for ready access to first-rate in-depth material about Canada makes the role of the Canadian public affairs officers in centers throughout the