

# The Canadian Foreign Service Institute

by R.H. Graham Mitchell

The establishment of the Canadian Foreign Service Institute (CFSI) by External Affairs and International Trade Canada (EAITC) is good news. It is the manifestation of a different kind of thinking in the Department. Its very existence embodies a guarantee that the unique professional skills of the Foreign Service have been recognized and will be systematically reinforced.

Je voudrais que ce message parvienne rapidement à chacun de nos collègues. Un grand nombre de lecteurs de *bout* a assisté à l'inauguration officielle de l'Institut le 1<sup>er</sup> octobre 1992, et d'autres ont vu le dépliant

sur l'Institut ou ont pris part à nos cours de formation au cours des derniers mois. Mais j'espère que cet article fera prendre conscience à un auditoire plus vaste, tant au dedans qu'en dehors du service extérieur, de l'importance du nouvel Institut.

First, here is a little background. When I joined the Foreign Service in 1963, the training given to recruits was entirely "on the job". We moved from division to division, learning by doing. Departmental lore was passed on to us through informal contacts with senior colleagues at the office or in occasional evening sessions, known colloquially as the "University of the East Block".

This training, such as it was, was considered a sophisticated improvement over the

training given to recruits thirty years earlier. Then, new Foreign Service Officers were routinely assigned to the code room at headquarters to cipher and decipher telegrams. This activity was expected to give them an overall view of the work done by the then Department of External Affairs.

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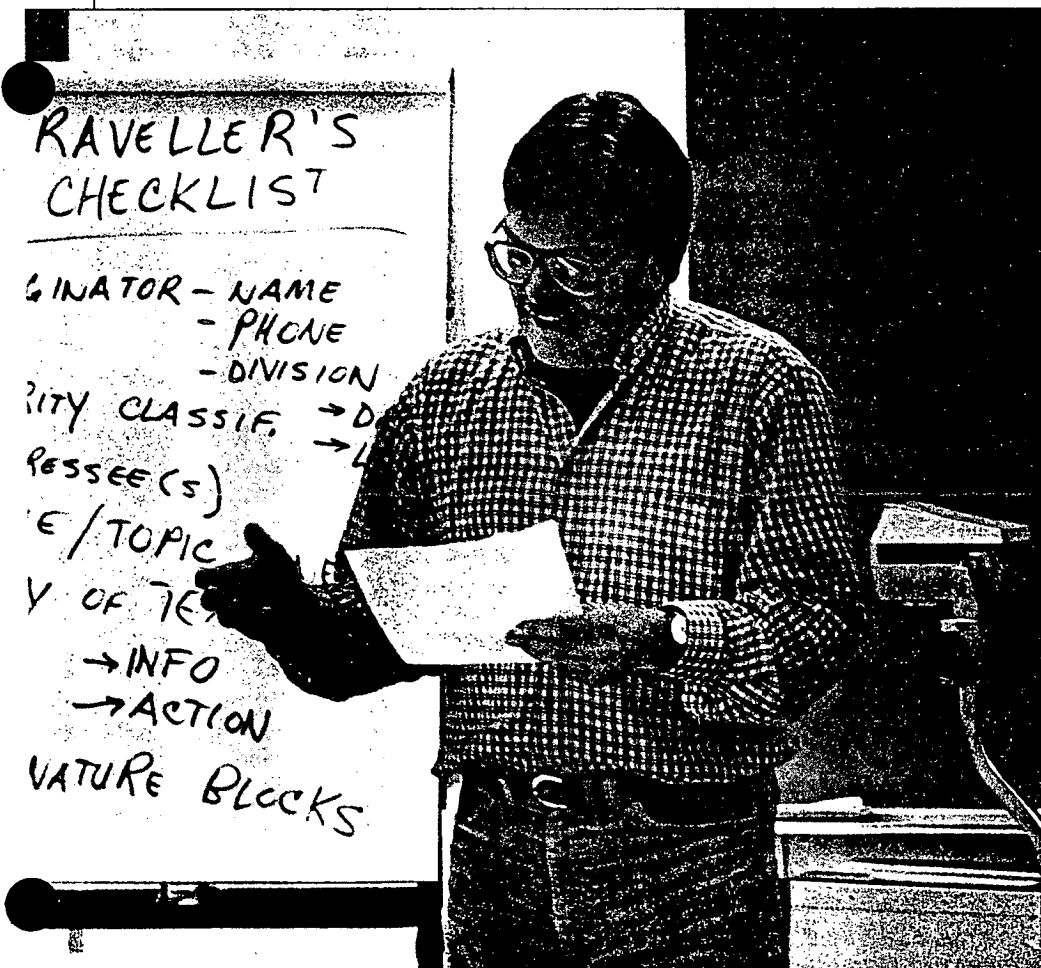
*L'Institut a pour mandat d'offrir une formation reliée à l'emploi à tous les employés du Ministère.*

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Today, much more focused, job-related training is required. Pressure is being applied on us from various sides to define our core tasks more clearly and to demonstrate our expertise. We in EAITC have not been quick to accept the need for a more professional approach, perhaps believing that foreign service expertise is too esoteric to be reduced to a training course. Changes, however, have occurred in the world of education too and new techniques have been developed to teach complex skills.

Depuis deux ans, le Ministère a profondément changé son attitude à l'égard de la formation. L'Institut canadien du service extérieur, créé en avril 1992, est le produit de ce changement.

Bien entendu, il se déroulait déjà au Ministère d'importantes activités liées à la formation. Avant le 1<sup>er</sup> avril 1992, la fonction « formation » était coordonnée par la Direction de la formation et du perfectionnement (APF). En 1989, le Ministère a fondé l'École des langues du service extérieur. L'Institut nouveau incorpore et développe maintenant les programmes de formation professionnelle et de formation linguistique déjà en place. Cependant, il concrétise une



Training the trainers: Gilles Poirier, one of the Institute's Program Managers, bones up on teaching methods.