

MARGARET CATLEY-CARLSON PRESIDENT OF CIDA

by Elizabeth Campbell-Pagé

Q. *Your career success presents a dynamic example for women, particularly for those who have chosen a foreign service career. What factors contributed to your current level of success?*

I usually answer that question by saying that I made my most intelligent decision before I was born by choosing fantastic parents. One of the intelligent adult decisions I made was to take two years off while studying at university to hitchhike around Europe and the Middle East. That was my most important decision because it changed my life. My second and third most important decisions both started the same day: to marry the man I met that day and to join External Affairs.

I still regard External Affairs as an enlightened employer. It was an extremely good place to both work and be trained. The skills I picked up were key to my career and I had very good assignments. I worked as the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) desk officer. At that time the developing world was a place few knew about and virtually no one wanted to know. There is no question that I got the left-over assignment. The other junior officers all had their choices before I arrived and development was not amongst them. There was not much appreciable interest in what I was doing so I therefore had quite a free hand in my work. I learned about a host of things that normally I would never have learned about including: shipping, technology transfer, insurance, commodities, and tariffs. My introduction to international economics, as practiced by External Affairs, came through this exposure. Subsequently, I moved to Commercial Policy Division, and was called upon as the resident expert on development. The object lesson here is that paddling around in your own back-water is often the best preparation for long-term career interests.



While posted in London, Pam McDougall, then director general, asked me to join the North-South Conference on Economic Development being held in Paris. I held both jobs for 18 months. It was after that that Michael Dupuy invited me to take on the position of VP, Multi-lateral. It was an enormous leap of faith for him, because until then I had been a section head and had never passed through the system as Director or Director General. At the age of 34 I was Vice-President, had a staff of 34, and was handling international negotiations of \$350 million. The area of Development, which had been so obscure for so long, was also becoming recognized as a Canadian priority issue.

Q. *Negotiation requires a complete skills set and practice for proficiency. How did you acquire the skills necessary for the job?*

Negotiation is a combination of four things. If you don't have these four things you'll be very handicapped as a negotiator.

- 1. Know your subject very, very well.
- 2. Understand entirely where the person on the other side of the table is coming from.
- 3. Put forward positions which give yourself the advantage but also acknowledge enough of his concerns that he can agree

Ms. Catley-Carlson was appointed as CIDA's fifth president in 1983. Before this she was Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and Deputy Executive Director (Operations) for UNICEF. She joined the Department of External Affairs in 1966, working overseas as second secretary at the Canadian High Commission in Sri Lanka (1968) and as economic counsellor at the Canadian High Commission in London (1975). She also served in Canada with several divisions of the department, including aid and development (1970), commercial policy (1973), and as assistant under-secretary (1981). She first joined CIDA in 1978 as vice-president (multi-lateral).