

FSD'S AND OUR LIVES ABROAD

Triennial Review: All You Wanted to Know...and Some

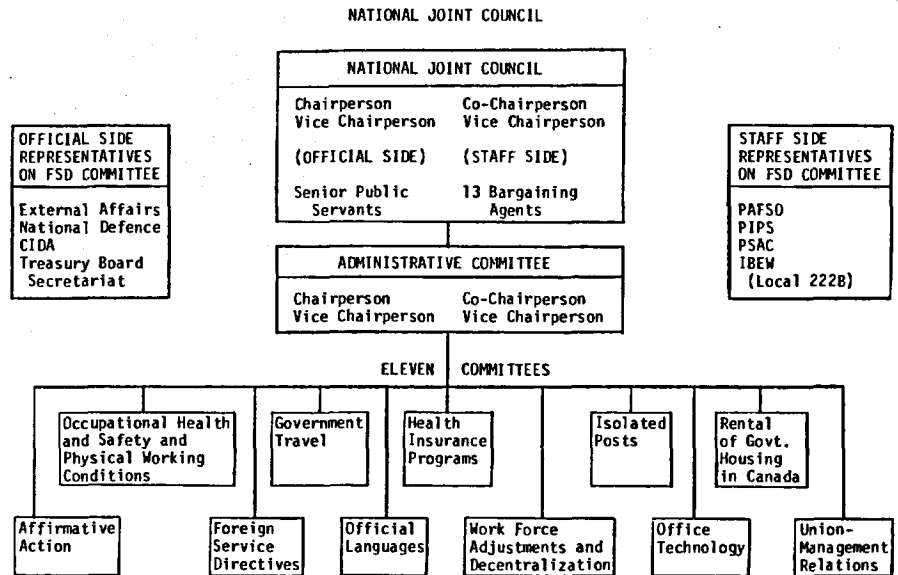
As 1985 rises over the horizon, the lead story on the FSD's is "Triennial Review": What is it? Why is it done? Who does it and where? How do we contribute to it, and how does it affect our lives?

The introduction to the FSD's says that the directives are reviewed every three years to ensure that terms and conditions of employment for employees serving abroad under the provisions of the directives are kept up to date.

The Foreign Service Directives, like the Treasury Board Travel and Relocation Policies, concern matters on which it is desirable to have one policy throughout the whole of the Public Service. It would be very complicated and time-consuming, however, to negotiate such matters separately with 76 different bargaining units. Accordingly, the National Joint Council (NJC) of the Public Service of Canada, created by an Order-in-Council in 1944, provides a forum for regular consultation between the government, as the employer, and employee organizations certified as bargaining agents under the Public Service Staff Relations Act. Thus, on its fortieth anniversary, the NJC can look back on a long history of adapting to changing circumstances in dealing with the many and varied issues affecting the working conditions and well-being of Public Service employees on a service-wide basis.

At present, 13 employee organizations constitute the Staff Side of the NJC, including the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSCA), the Professional Association of Foreign Service Officers (PAFSO), the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada (PIPS), and Local 2228 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), as well as other associations representing air traffic controllers, dockyard workers, economists, sociologists, statisticians, merchant seamen, graphic artists, researchers, and professional and technical employees. The President of the Treasury Board appoints senior administrative officers of the Public Service to represent the employer or Official Side. Three separate employers (the National Research Council, the Medical Research Council, and the Office of the Auditor General) also participate in the NJC. The number of Official Side members may not exceed the number of Staff Side members.

The Council is chaired alternately by the Chairperson of the Official Side, who is appointed by the President of the Treasury Board, and by a Co-Chairperson, who has



been elected by the employee representatives, to chair the Staff Side. Each Side also has a Vice-Chairperson. These four officers make up the NJC Administrative Committee.

The work of the Council is carried out in committees set up by the Administrative Committee. The NJC Foreign Service Directives Committee is one of eleven committees dealing with such matters as occupational health and safety, government travel, isolated posts, and official languages.

The Official Side and the Staff Side are entitled to equal representation on committees, but the Committee Chairpersons must be independent, objective presiding officers who are not actively representing either Side, and decisions in committees are reached by consensus rather than by majority vote. The Staff Side of the FSD Committee is represented by PAFSO, PIPS, PSAC, and IBEW Local 2228, and the Official Side by the Department of External Affairs and National Defence, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and the Treasury Board Secretariat.

Changes to the FSD's may be proposed by staff associations and government departments and agencies, based on suggestions from union members and executives (Staff Side) and departmental managers, including Heads of Posts, for example (Official Side). In the NJC FSD Committee, these proposals for change will be considered in the light of the basic principles underlying the Directives (comparability, employee incentive, program effectiveness), the implications for existing provisions in collective agreements and for other elements of the Public Service, the elimination of anomalies and various forms of discrimination and, of course, the financial and administrative costs or savings to implement the changes.

The consensus of the Committee will be reported to the Council in the form of recommendations for the Council's approval and referral to the Treasury Board. Changes will then be incorporated in the revised (1985) directives for approval by the Treasury Board and adoption by the parties to the NJC. As is the case with the current (1982) directives, the revised directives will be deemed to be part of the collective agreements between the parties to the National Joint Council.

Thus is completed another cycle in the process of updating the FSD's. Perhaps by better understanding this process, we will be more encouraged to take an active role in developing terms and conditions of employment abroad which reflect the changing circumstances of our families and our world. We might even arrive at a greater appreciation of the spirit and intent of our ever changing FSD's.

NOTE: The assistance of the Treasury Board Secretariat in preparing this article for publication is gratefully acknowledged.

TEST YOUR T.S. (TRADE SMARTS)

- (1) What blue Canadian food product do the Japanese love?
- (2) What Canadian product saves lives in Africa?
- (3) What do we export that you can't see?
- (4) What export can't take the heat?
- (5) Who buys our bubble gum?
- (6) Do we export Christmas?
- (7) What product do we export more of than any other country in the world?
- (8) What are our three major exports?

(Answers are on page 18)