

At the end of a visit to China in June 1979 by a Canadian delegation of federal and provincial representatives, Canada signed a memorandum of understanding for the promotion of academic exchanges between the two countries. The memorandum provided in particular for a one-year program through which Chinese researchers would come to complete their training alongside Canadian researchers. The Secretariat of the Council of Ministers of Education (Canada) was made responsible for carrying out the program, while a steering committee made up of representatives of the federal and provincial authorities assumed general responsibility for it. With very significant co-operation from the provinces, Canada was thus able to receive some 190 Chinese researchers during the 1979-80 academic year.

In 1979, the Department helped make arrangements for the visits of a number of provincial premiers going abroad. Premier Bennett of British Columbia went to Korea and Japan; Premier Lougheed of Alberta visited the United States; Saskatchewan's Premier Blakeney went to Europe and Australia; Manitoba's Premier Lyon visited Australia and New Zealand; Premier Davis of Ontario travelled to Western Europe; Premier Hatfield of New Brunswick went to Western Europe and North Africa, and Premier Buchanan of Nova Scotia visited New England. In addition, numerous visits abroad were organized for ministers from all the provinces; almost every week, official missions went abroad or came from abroad to visit a Canadian province.

Executive information

An executive information service attached to the Office of the Under-Secretary is responsible for effective executive communication at headquarters, between headquarters and posts, and with other departments and agencies of the Federal Government that have an interest in Canada's foreign relations. The Service discharged its responsibility by the circulation at headquarters of daily summaries of important communications between the Department in Ottawa and the missions abroad and by regular publication and distribution within the Department and the Government of material concerning foreign-policy matters.

Communications and information retrieval systems

Telegraph traffic during 1979 approached three million messages, of which approximately 45 per cent were carried for departments other than External Affairs.

The telecommunications network responded well to general increases in traffic and particularly those relating to the Iranian and Afghanistan crises and the refugee activities in Southeast Asia. Radio links, established with Tehran as an alternative to commercial services, played a key role prior to the evacuation of the Embassy. The realignment of additional circuits to the Ottawa message switch enhanced network carrying capacity with considerable stabilization of operational expenditures in the face of rising costs and traffic levels.

The re-equipment program at posts abroad continued ahead of schedule. The program enabled some personnel savings overseas and improved traffic handling capabilities both at headquarters and posts. Technical inspections were carried out at some 20 diplomatic posts abroad to ensure the integrity of the secure communications system.

The Diplomatic Courier Service entered into a program of co-operation with the Australian and British courier services under which each partner looks after the others in certain areas. All parties were able to gain savings without reducing service to posts.

Obsolescent foreign and Canadian telephone equipment was replaced with modern Canadian systems wherever allowed by local authorities. Included in the program are major installations for Paris, New York and Washington where the Northern Telecon SL-1 technology is being introduced.

To increase the productivity of the Department's typing operations, the Word Processing Services Section was further expanded at headquarters to provide central service available to all bureaux. It has proved to be of great value in the editing and production of long tests, "multiple" letters and letters with variable inserts, and in support of the rapid daily production of material for the Executive Information Service and others.

Major progress was made in implementing an automated information storage and retrieval system with the recruitment of additional para-professional staff.

The Library experienced a further 217 per cent expansion of research demands involving specialized "on-line" access to computer data bases. The Library also participated in the development of an automated statistical data base to facilitate analysis of Canada's bilateral relations with other countries.

Personnel

The Bureau of Personnel is responsible for the recruitment, assignment, salaries and general working conditions of 1450 employees at Headquarters and 1250 Canadians and 2375 locally-engaged employees at 117 posts. 1979 saw the Bureau assisting the Department to implement measures of budgetary restraint, particularly their personnel management aspects, while continuing those operations essential to the effective functioning of posts abroad and Headquarters' Units.

A major project involved a complete review of personnel utilisation at Headquarters, which led to the institution of a "personnel budgeting" system, through which personnel reductions were implemented. A similar review of posts abroad was also undertaken and was nearing completion at the end of the year.

During the year, the Bureau also led a study which resulted in a decision to establish a group of rotational