

□ POSTING SERVICES CENTRE UPDATE □

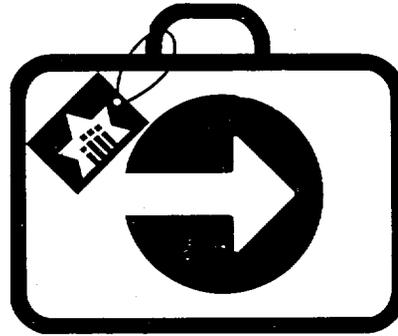
THE ROLE OF THE POSTING SERVICES CENTRE

In the first of this series of articles, it was noted that few of our staff spend any significant amount of their time giving briefings. Nonetheless, a large part of our mandate is to assist foreign service employees and their families with preparations for departure and return. This helps to facilitate their adaptation to living and working in a foreign environment and their re-integration into the Canadian milieu on return from abroad.

Our mandate is twofold, addressing the two distinct aspects of preparation and adjustment involved in relocation from one assignment to another: the physical, administrative aspect and the less tangible but even more important mental/emotional aspect. The Information Services and Posting Arrangements functions of the Centre address mainly the former, our Training functions focus especially on the latter.

PART III — TRAINING FUNCTIONS

The Centre benefits from the services of one full-time training officer responsible for the Pre-Posting and Re-Entry Workshop Programs and of an administrative officer whose responsibilities include a Workshop Program for Spouses. Their functions are to identify training needs, develop appropriate workshops and briefings, plan programs accessible to the clientele, organize the necessary human and physical resources, supervise the administration, and evaluate the services provided and the results obtained. With all these responsibilities, a training officer has little



time to be a trainer as well. Besides, the training to be given is often specialized, requiring either experience of particular posts or situations (e.g., for giving a briefing on China or leading a workshop on protocol and hospitality) or the qualifications of an expert trained and experienced in a particular field (e.g., a psychologist for dealing with stress management or re-entry adjustment, a tax lawyer explaining taxation, a counselor to assist spouses with career planning).

Major studies have provided the basis for the elaboration of our role: e.g., "Evaluation Design for the Overseas Briefing Center" prepared by Michael F. Tucker, Ph.D., of the Centre for Research and Education in Denver, Colorado, in April 1976; "A Debriefing/Re-Entry Process for External Affairs" by Michael Miner, M.A., of International Briefing Associates in Vancouver in December 1981; and, of course, the report of the Royal Commission on Conditions of Foreign Service submitted to the Government by Pamela McDougall in October 1981. Other inputs have included internal studies, such as our "Training Needs Study" of July 1985, and submissions from the Foreign Service Community Association, both oral and written. Most of these have been based on extensive consultations and

surveys. We also depend, to some extent, on our contacts in other governments (e.g., the Overseas Briefing Centre of the U.S. State Department's Foreign Service Institute) and on organizations such as the International Society for Intercultural Education, Training and Research (SIETAR) in which we maintain a corporate membership and whose scholarly publication, *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, we receive quarterly.

Even with all this study and consultation, however, we maintain the flexibility to act on spontaneous suggestions of employees, spouses, managers, other units, divisions and departments. Such was the case in the development of workshops and briefings on the Chernobyl incident, on property management, and on coping with the needs of the elderly.

Once a calendar has been planned, the organization of the necessary resources is especially time-consuming: soliciting and studying proposals for about 25 day and evening workshops in both English and French, selecting contractors and drawing up contracts (almost 50 for 1986).

Publicity is an ongoing concern from the time the calendar is drawn up. In addition to the customary posters and announcements in the Department's Administrative Notices, letters are sent to all spouses on our Direct Communication with Spouses Mailing List for the National Capital Region with information on contract possibilities as well as the workshops themselves. The importance of this mailing list cannot be stressed enough: we so often hear comments that a spouse has not heard of the opportunity to submit a proposal or attend an interesting workshop only