

# RAYMOND J. CHRÉTIEN

## Associate Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs Part I



Interview by E. Campbell-Pagé

employment, which is becoming perhaps one of the most important issues facing the foreign service in the 1990's?

Spousal employment is a top priority for me. I don't think that we will ever be able to solve that problem completely, but as a department, we have to increase our efforts to make sure that we negotiate more reciprocity agreements with a number of countries around the world. We have to seek, within our embassies abroad, whenever possible, employment possibilities for spouses. We have to develop a package to compensate our spouses abroad. In many cases, they play an important role in promoting Canadian interests in the world. At the moment, in my view, this is not sufficiently recognized. I'd like our spouses to be given credit, not only verbally but financially as well.

We are proceeding now with the development of a package that would provide, if accepted by Treasury Board, real compensation for the work performed on behalf of the government by spouses abroad.

I'm very conscious of the fact that a number of spouses have had to quite often put their careers on hold, or in some cases to abandon them totally, in order to pursue the career of the employee of the Department working abroad. That is a very heavy price to pay and I want to spare no effort in trying to rectify that situation.

**What initiatives are being explored to promote women in the Department?**

There are women in many categories in this Department, each representing challenges and problems not necessarily shared with other categories. For example, our secretaries' problems are not necessarily the same as

**ECP - Would you describe for us your professional background leading to your appointment as Associate Under-Secretary at External Affairs?**

**Mr. Chrétien:** I'm a lawyer by profession and I joined the Department in 1966. I was in New York with our Permanent Mission. I served in Lebanon between 1972-1975, was Counsellor in Paris from 1975-78, and then at the age of 36, was appointed Ambassador to Zaire with accreditation to the Congo, Rwanda and Burundi. Following my assignment in Zaire, I returned to Ottawa in 1981, where I served as Director General of one of our economic bureaus, and then as the Inspector General of the Department for two years before I went to Mexico in the summer of 1985. I was fortunate enough, during my early years in Ottawa, to be seconded to both the Treasury Board, the Privy Council Office, and finally to CIDA as Executive Assistant to the President. Those various secondments have proven to be extremely useful throughout the years in the Department and to help me discharge my present functions.

**How can External Affairs effectively access the pool of available skilled resources represented by spouses?  
How will you tackle this issue of spousal**