

domestic servants were examined, six required further investigation and two required continuing treatment.

The health of an individual may be influenced by any of a large number of environmental factors. These are not static but subject to continual change. Periodic assessment of the total environment at posts abroad is consequently a continuing necessity.

Certain elementary environmental factors influence total wellbeing whether the individual is employed in Canada or abroad — for example, office temperatures and lighting conditions. Even in such elementary matters, however, optimum conditions may be much more difficult to achieve abroad.

### **Effects of Alien Environment**

Other features of the environment in which he is required to work may be completely alien to the Canadian public servant employed abroad. Climate, housing, food and water supplies, sewage disposal, recreational facilities, local customs, communicable disease prevalence, insect pests or vectors of disease — any or all of these may pose problems of greater or lesser degree. All these environmental features must be considered in a professional evaluation of conditions at a given post, whether this assessment is for the purpose of making a formal post-rating or providing the background knowledge against which a particular health problem of an individual must be weighed.

Some degree of "culture shock" is inevitable in every posting abroad. Both the degree and the reaction of the individual to it will vary with the personality and background of that individual. The degree varies greatly with the post. At a post where the environment closely resembles that at home, culture shock may not be discernible. This is more likely to be the case if the national language is the mother tongue of the individual involved. In a tropical, unhealthy and perhaps hostile situation, culture shock may be severe. The early detection of an unfavorable reaction may do much to improve morale and, in certain instances, to prevent the psychological breakdown of an employee or dependent.

The duties of Canadian medical officers abroad are not confined to their public service health activities. The increased emphasis on closer professional relations with physicians in the host country provides a much wider basis for exchange of medical scientific data than has hitherto been the case.

### **Representational Role**

This medical representational function is, in fact, a defined program activity. It is necessary to establish suitable personal contacts for this purpose, not only among practising physicians of other countries but with professional bodies and health administrations. The extent to which this activity has so far been developed varies in countries where medical officers have been stationed for some time. It remains to be inaugurated in others. Its success is directly related to the ability of the Canadian medical officer to gain acceptance by the higher