

□ INTERVIEW □

various allowance packages that we have are designed to try to minimize the variations in conditions for people living abroad. But I would not want to see a situation where we are trying at whatever the cost to duplicate for Canadians serving abroad all the conditions that they may enjoy in Canada.

S. G.: The role of spouses has always been a tricky question. Is there a place for spouses in the foreign service? You often hear allegations that the Department only pays lip service to this question.

D. B.: Well, it's a very difficult point... I think this is a very difficult question because there is a distinction between the role of a spouse and the situation of a spouse. My experience is that there are more answers than there are problems in this area. In fact, every spouse I talk to has a different solution.

S. G.: Why don't you put those solutions together?

D. B.: I don't think there is a common solution. Maybe I'm old-fashioned, and I'm older. I've looked at this in terms of what the Japanese do, which I thought was a very progressive policy. In a system like the Japanese, the spouse has an opting in and opting out role to choose. The allowances of the family are dictated by her decision or his decision to opt in or out of a representational role. I'm talking here about the officers and their spouses, not about support staff and their spouses. There is a distinction that has to be recognized here.

S. G.: Is the Department of External Affairs doing anything about the spouse's career? (Some spouses have to resign and give up their career).

D. B.: This is a problem. All that we can do as a foreign service is, I think, what we are doing. And that is try as much as we can to accommodate, either through leave without pay provisions, or through agreements with other countries that will enable spouses to seek employment while they are serving with their spouse in an embassy. We will continue to negotiate, on a reciprocal basis, improved employment prospects as much as possible.

This is not a problem that lends itself to a simple, common solution. I think what we have to do is to continue to expand the opportunities for the maintenance of separate careers by spouses who want that, and at the same time we have to provide maximal support to spouses who want to be part of the role of the employee. And there are a variety of ways in which we can do that. But as I say, if I have six spouses in my office, they will have six different ways of recommending that we act.

S. G.: What do you think of the status of French and of Francophones in the Department?

D. B.: It is a continuing question. There are peaks and valleys in terms of the use of French in the Department. It's a function, in the first instance, of the senior people in the Department. The Ministers and the Department adopt habits that reflect the senior echelon. I would like to see more of the discussions in our Executive Committee, in our Management Committee, in both languages. The Department has had a tradition of meetings being conducted in both languages with each person having the right to

speak his or her own language, and that was certainly the Department I grew up in. It's the Department I'm accustomed to and I would like to see more of it in the future.

S. G.: What are your plans for the future?

D. B.: We have a major management plan that we are trying to introduce into the Department, part of which is to manage the requirement to reduce our size. Another part of this is a new communication system for the Department which, if it is successful, will probably be the most important instrument for the Department in the next decade and the decades after that. It is a phenomenal undertaking, sanctioned by the Treasury Board. And so on the management side, the implementation of the long range management plan and the establishment of good rapport with the central agencies are present and future projects that are of considerable importance to me.

I would like to see some changes in our personnel policy as well. I have lots of ideas on that, which if we have time I hope we can implement. I want to maximize the opportunities for the talent of the Department to be put on display both inside the government and outside the government.

In terms of the policy areas, I am anxious to preserve the Department as it is, as a combined department of trade and external affairs. I think it has now come together effectively in that capacity. I would like to see that preserved

S. G.: Thank you very much □