

The Department of External Affairs and the five staff associations representing its employees formalised on April 26 the setting-up of a new joint management-staff consultation committee to be known as the External Affairs Joint Council. The Council will meet regularly to discuss a wide range of subjects of common interest to the Department and its employees.

At the signing ceremony, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Allan J. MacEachen, stressed the importance to his Department of mutual employer-employee respect and understanding. Noting the difficult and sometimes hazardous conditions under which the foreign service must operate, Mr. MacEachen expressed his appreciation for the contribution of all employees. He cited as auguring well for the future the positive and constructive discussions reflected in the minutes of the three meetings of the Council which preceded the signing of the terms of reference. He stated his own conviction that its creation represented a distinct step forward and endorsed the determination of the Department to participate in the consultative process in good faith.

The Under-Secretary, Mr. Basil Robinson, reiterated the sentiments expressed by Mr. MacEachen and added that, in expecting a great deal of its employees, his Department recognized that its own commitment to employees was greater. Mr. Robinson stated that departmental representation in the Council would be at senior levels.

Speaking on behalf of the Economists', Sociologists' and Statisticians' Association, its President, Mr. Ken Eaton, expressed his support of the work of the EAJC and observed that the importance which the Department attached to good relations with its staff was reflected in the participation of the Minister at the signing of the Council's mandate.

Mr. Claude Edwards, President of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, expressed the hope that the example set in the Department, aimed at minimising the risk of confrontation and promoting positive employer-employee relationships, would be followed by others both in the public and private sectors.

Others signing the Council's terms of reference included Mr. Sid Harris, President of the Professional Association of Foreign Service Officers, Mr. Chesley Lockhart, President of the Professional Institute of the Public Service and Mr. Raymond Charron, Assistant Business Manager of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.