

Presentation of Telegrams and Current Documents

110. One of the problems faced by senior management is to be able to maintain a grasp of all the main threads of international developments and Canadian involvement in them. Apart from matters brought up for action or decision, the daily telegram "pack" of substantive messages provides some assistance but imposes its own burdens on readers. Alternatives will become possible with the installation of the message switch due this year. For example, each day's telegrams could be placed in temporary storage in a subsidiary system. From there, anyone using simple procedures on a CRT could call up and scan all the subject headings, recording those in which he had an interest as he went along. As a next step he could call up the lead paragraphs of those of concern to him, or the full text as he might choose. Telegrams could be held in the subsidiary system for recall for a number of days, perhaps as much as a week, after which they would of course always be recoverable from the main system. This approach would only yield the minimum benefits if originators of substantive telegrams would accept the necessary discipline to adopt as standard practice the drafting of comprehensive lead paragraphs. This aspect is discussed in more detail in paragraphs 180 to 187.

111. Along with the daily telegrams the system could also store and present all current memoranda to the Minister. Similarly, Departmental memoranda before Cabinet and major items before Treasury Board could be identified by subject and purpose, and their current status recorded, such as dates of scheduled Cabinet Committee meetings and Departmental representation if required. Current memoranda to Cabinet originating in other departments could be added to the list where the Department had an active interest. The system could also accommodate questions either before the House of Commons or anticipated, and the suggested replies. The rapid input of most of the material into the subsidiary system would be the responsibility of the various Bureau Information Control Officers, in collaboration with the Information Control Officer attached to the Central Staff, and under the guidance of the Central Information Control Office. The selected telegrams taken together with this other material could provide a useful basis for discussion at a daily meeting of the Under-Secretarial Group perhaps prior to the Under-Secretary's usual morning session with the Minister. Aside from being of value to the Under-Secretarial Group, a facility of the kind described would receive constant use from the Press Office. On occasion, Directors-General or other officers in Bureaux might avail themselves of information in the system with the Assistance of the Bureau Information Control Officers through their CRT terminals.

POPSUM

112. The telegram "pack" provides the basis for the selection and production of POPSUM\* which has forty-two subscribers outside the Department and wide internal circulation. A survey conducted in December, 1974, yielded a majority opinion that readers valued POPSUM and wished the service to continue. The circumstances in which POPSUM is produced place rather severe limitations on its potential for development and on the quality of the product itself. The

\*POPSUM is a summary of selected telegrams and wire service news items circulated by 9:00 a.m. each day.