

It is of course difficult for the members of the liaison team to form an objective assessment of the situation at a post after only a limited period of exposure. No hard and fast rules are laid down to govern the team's method of operation. Experience has shown, however, that it is useful and important to establish contact with all Canadian members of the staff by a series of personal interviews soon after the team's arrival at the post. These interviews are often extended to include some or all members of the locally-engaged staff and provide an opportunity not only for a discussion of personal problems but also for the team members to form an accurate picture of the post's activities. Subsequently the liaison team, either individually or collectively, turns its attention to all respects of the post's operations, e.g., its reporting functions, consular and information work, and office administration. Out of this examination of specific aspects of the mission's work and discussions with the head of mission may come recommendations regarding changes in method, increases or decreases in staff, rearrangement of duties or other steps designed to help or to improve the post's operations. On their return to Ottawa the External Affairs members of the liaison team outline their findings in a report to the Under-Secretary and make whatever recommendations they may consider necessary. A copy of this report is sent to the head of mission concerned for his information and its contents are brought to the attention of the interested divisions in the Department.

The role of the Inspection Service is essentially an advisory one and its officers have no executive authority to put liaison team recommendations into effect. They do, however, have a follow-up responsibility and their close liaison with other divisions in the Department provides ample opportunity not only to discuss the feasibility of their recommendations but also to make the first-hand knowledge gained from the liaison tours available when required. The recommendations of a liaison team sometimes result in the immediate solution of a particular personnel or other problem. These immediate benefits are important, particularly from the point of view of morale. The long-term advantages of a well-planned programme of liaison visits are perhaps responsible, however, for the greatest benefit to the Department, its posts abroad and to the members of the foreign service. Periodic visits to a wide variety of Canadian missions, many of them operating under totally different conditions, provide an excellent opportunity to compare problems and their solutions, to discuss departmental policy with those responsible for its implementation in the field and to lay the ground work for improvements in departmental procedures and regulations. Thus, in terms of both immediate problems and long-term planning, the Inspection Service plays an important part in the administration of the Department of External Affairs and the implementation of Canadian foreign policy.