

* * * STYLE OF WRITING * * *

1. "Foreign Trade" does not ask or expect that the reports it publishes shall be written in a particular style or follow an established pattern. The style of writing will vary with the author, because it will reflect his personality, temperament and training. It will also vary with the subject; a report on business conditions will differ in style from one on the market for blueberries. Within limits "Foreign Trade" welcomes individuality, not conformity, in reports.

2. Report-writers should bear in mind that "Foreign Trade" is published for the Canadian businessman and must compete with other publications for his attention. He expects to find in it useful information presented clearly and concisely, because his time for reading is usually limited.

The following suggestions may help Trade Commissioners to prepare practical, readable reports.

(a) Organization

Always organize your material and draw up a rough plan before you begin to write. Some articles that "Foreign Trade" receives have obviously been dictated from rough notes and are loosely constructed and repetitive. An initial plan assures an orderly treatment of the subject, and a smooth transition from one phase of it to the next. The "Style Manual for Writers and Editors" to be published by the Queen's Printer, covers many aspects of writing and includes a useful chapter on "Organization and Prose Style". (A copy will be sent to each office).

(b) Introduction

The first paragraph in a report should attract and hold the reader's interest. It is best to begin with a simple, direct statement — "The Iranian economy is back on its feet, after twelve months of slow recovery" — not with a subordinate clause or a qualification. For variety, a report may begin with a case history or an incident that illustrates points made later on. The first, or failing that the second, paragraph should always give some idea of the subject and scope of the report.

(c) Paragraphs

Keep the paragraphs fairly short and begin a new one as you progress to a new topic. Remember that one paragraph should lead into another, without an abrupt transition. Sentences too should be short, with some longer ones mixed in to avoid a choppy effect.

(d) Illustrations

Use examples or case histories whenever you can to illustrate the statements that you make. (When you can draw upon your own experience, these illustrations are particularly effective). They result in a more graphic report. Sometimes it is useful to quote an agent, businessman or banker in the country from which you are writing.