

Up until recently, it has been a generally accepted fact that almost no matter how unsuited to Foreign Service, or how inefficient an employee turned out to be, he or she could and did (and perhaps may continue to do so?) go the full route, even without much promotion, but being shifted from one job to another and from one post abroad to another. If we are to deal satisfactorily with this retirement problem, it is of the greatest importance that it be tackled from the start and not only at the end.

At the present time, officers and staff joining the Department are theoretically subject to one year's probation. This is both unsatisfactory and unrealistic. Even if the option were conscientiously exercised, which almost invariably it is not, it would still be unsatisfactory because it is not possible within a year to judge whether a new recruit is suitable or mentally conditioned towards Foreign Service. He or she is usually kept in Ottawa for at least a year on joining, so that even if his work technically seems sound, there is no way of judging how he and his family will react to Foreign Service - how can he or she adapt to making a new home in a strange land, possibly strange language, no built-in social environment, etc. How will the recruit adapt to working perhaps in a small mission where even as "low man on the totem pole", he may have to shoulder sudden responsibilities that may be bewildering, where he must adapt to the idiosyncrasies of only a very few colleagues from Canada and a few "locals" whose lifestyle may be totally different from anything he has experienced before. How will he react to a "difficult" head of post, knowing that he has really not much hope of relief for at least two years? Perhaps the head of post will be incompatible with the new recruit so that the latter receives a poor rating, yet in fact both may be blameless, for one cannot force compatibility and therefore sympathetic understanding on personalities that may be mutually abrasive.