

V Public Affairs

The object of the Department's public-affairs program is to provide the means of communication between the Canadian Government, Canadians and important audiences abroad for the attainment of Canada's foreign-policy aims. In the making and execution of foreign policy, there is a constant need for accurate knowledge of the nature of public opinion both in those countries that are of chief interest to Canada and in Canada itself. The attitudes of particular sections of any nation can exert an important influence on the behaviour of its government and sometimes on that of other governments as well.

The environment in which Canadian foreign relations are being conducted has been changing and, in the public dimension, will require increasing sensitivity, flexibility and involvement on the part of Canadian representatives abroad. In 1976, there was a marked increase in the international attention devoted to Canada, and (except for the Olympic Games) this was principally due to domestic political and economic events. This development has created a new sense of the need to explain the democratic process of the country to foreign audiences, and to emphasize its underlying strength and national purpose, its importance in world affairs and its versatility and diversity.

In mid-1976, the Public Relations Division was created from within the existing establishment of the Public Affairs Bureau to provide a means for rapidly processing policy information, whatever its point of origin within Canada, and speeding it to posts abroad. The new division is also concerned with increasing public awareness in Canada of the nature and relevance of foreign-policy issues and Government responses to them.

During 1976 the Bureau sought to develop a headquarters organization for administering a day-to-day information and public-relations program at home and abroad and, at the same time, for enhancing, through cultural and academic relations, the longer-range promotion of mutual understanding between Canada and a number of foreign countries. The Bureau sought to reflect inter-

nationally the growing creativity, scope and diversity of Canadian culture and learning, both as achievements in themselves and as essential contributions to Canadian foreign policy. It also kept abreast of, and often supported or associated itself with, the activities of private Canadian citizens and organizations — involved in religious affairs, commerce, communications, science and technology, sports and so on — in association with other departments, agencies and levels of government in Canada. The scope of international public diplomacy is being extended rapidly by electronic communication and by rapid and easy travel. The pursuit of Canada's public diplomacy in turn presents increasingly widespread opportunities, and increasingly complex difficulties, both for the Bureau of Public Affairs and for Canadian posts abroad.

Academic relations

The Academic Relations Division has the responsibility of promoting and co-ordinating relations between the Department and universities, at home and abroad, possessing an interest in Canadian foreign policy, and with other organizations interested in this field. The object is to develop lines of communication between officials responsible for implementing foreign policy and scholars and others who are studying the many aspects of international relations. A second responsibility of the Division is the development of programs of Canadian studies abroad.

Foreign service visitors

One fruitful form of exchange has been the seconding of senior foreign-service officers as "visitors" to Canadian universities. This program frees officers from departmental duties for an academic year, enabling them to devote their time to research, teaching, writing and the holding of seminars and consultations on international relations under arrangements worked out with the universities they visit. At the beginning of the program, two foreign-service visitors were designated, but in 1972 three were appointed — one each to York University and the Universities of British