

SECRET/UNCLASSIFIED

February 1985

STANDARDS OF PERSONAL BEHAVIOUR ABROAD

While serving abroad, employees of the Department have a particular responsibility to ensure that their behaviour and that of members of their families at the post does not discredit or adversely affect Canada's image or relations. To aid employees in meeting this responsibility the Department issued in 1981 the Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Guidelines which set standards of personal conduct for service both at home and abroad. The Code recognizes that when abroad employees often assume responsibilities additional to those commonly shared by domestic public servants and that they will be at times exposed to difficult and sensitive situations.

Practical experience suggests that more detailed guidance may be helpful especially for employees serving abroad. This paper provides such guidance by drawing attention to types of activities that can create problems and, equally important, by detailing the responsibilities of management for dealing with behavioural problems. It thus serves to familiarize employees not only with possible problems but also with the methods which will be used to deal with these problems. The guidelines embody two important principles underlying the Department's approach to personnel management. The first is that rotational employees must be personally suitable for specific positions and posts; the second is that problems of behaviour abroad are the responsibility of the Head of Mission and are to be handled in the first instance by the supervisor with primary responsibility for the employee in question.

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It is not intended to set guidelines for acceptable conduct in all imaginable circumstances. Customs and proprieties can vary enormously so that behaviour that is perfectly normal in some countries may be quite offensive in others. Similarly laws vary greatly - activities that are illegal in some countries are acceptable in others. It is also impossible to provide guidance for each group and level. Officers with representational functions have to conduct themselves according to what is locally expected from persons in their position. The role of a Head of Mission may render unacceptable certain types of conduct which could be tolerated in junior officers. Thus the seriousness of any problem of behaviour may often be determined by factors that differ from post to post.

While employees are normally required to use their judgment and initiative to cope with conditions abroad, and to seek authoritative advice if necessary, it may be helpful to focus on some aspects of personal conduct that by experience are known to be particularly likely to create problems. The following list is indicative and not exhaustive.

- abuse of alcohol or drugs
- addiction to alcohol or drugs
- gambling, black market operations, excessive indebtedness
- abuse of privilege or status
- deceitfulness
- violation of local laws (e.g. traffic laws, currency regulations, sexual prohibitions), customs and proprieties (e.g. some expressions of sexual activity)

- some psychological disturbances
- general unacceptable behaviour in public such as rowdiness, rudeness or intolerance

Management Responsibilities

A fundamental responsibility of management is serious effort to cope with any behavioural problems that limit an employee's effectiveness. Action to this end may have three objectives: prevention, correction, and protection of Canadian interests. Refusal by management to take appropriate action demonstrates unwillingness or inability to carry out its supervisory responsibility.

Six measures - information, counselling, medical treatment, security classification, reassignment and discipline - which are briefly elucidated below are available for addressing problems of behaviour. Depending on the circumstances they may be used singly or in combination. One of the most important of these is discipline because many of the problems constitute misconduct and may require the application of various levels of discipline up to and including discharge.

I Information

As part of their preparations for a posting employees are expected to familiarize themselves with the beliefs, customs, laws and standards of public behaviour which prevail in the country or countries to which they are assigned or where they may travel and on arrival they are required to conform

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to local expectations of conduct. For the familiarization process the Posting Briefing Centre provides post reports, publications and video cassettes and the Library may have books, periodicals and documents. The security briefing draws attention to potential personal security threats such as ~~as~~ ^{as time passed by hostile intelligence services, etc.} blackmail. Post management is also responsible for acquainting staff both on arrival and later, as required with problems and dangers.

II Counselling

When employee behaviour interferes with the achievement of post objectives, the responsible supervisor must attempt to remedy the problem through advice and counselling. In the first instance he might explain to the employee the seriousness of the problem and the consequences of failing to resolve it and explore with him solutions. Depending on the problem, the employee may be reminded of the existence of the Departmental Welfare Counsellor (ABSW). If the problem involves misconduct, the mildest form of discipline, an oral reprimand may be required. The employee should be made aware that in the absence of improvement more severe disciplinary measures could follow. The supervisor should make notes on the interview and its results as evidence in support of more energetic action if it is required. It is impossible to overemphasize the importance of dealing with a problem quickly, compassionately and firmly.

III Medical Treatment

Some problems such as alcoholism may be susceptible to medical treatment or a transfer may be the answer. The Employee

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Assistance Program (ABDN) may be invoked to provide appropriate medical facilities. Medical treatment may have to be preceded and/or accompanied by disciplinary measures.

IV Security

When actions or behaviour lead to an actual or a potential threat to security the provisions of the appropriate security authorities come into play. The Department may decide to conduct its own investigation or request the Canadian Security Intelligence Service to do so. In either case the employee concerned would be given the opportunity to provide information to help clarify the situation. If security doubts cannot be resolved the case is presented to the Under-Secretary, normally with options for action and recommendations. The options could include: transfer to a less sensitive position within or outside the Department; inviting the employee's resignation or dismissing him in the interests of the safety or security of Canada (Financial Administration Act, sec. 7 (7)). Security problems may also require disciplinary action. It should be noted that employees are obliged to report developments that could affect or constitute a real or potential threat to security (Code of Conduct, pp. 16 - 17).

V Reassignment

Reassignment to Ottawa may result immediately following certain acts of misconduct or when threats to security dictate such action. Alternatively reassignment might follow the failure of counselling and discipline if unacceptable behaviour cannot

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corrected. When considering reassignment proposals post management must decide whether disciplinary action should accompany the reassignment. Reassignment should not be proposed simply to escape from a problem. Nor should it be proposed as a form of discipline. It is a method of protecting the Department and not of correcting behaviour. The ultimate authority for decisions regarding reassignment rests with headquarters.

VI Discipline

The most important response to a behavioural problem resulting in misconduct is discipline. The booklet on Discipline (Staff Relations Division, July, 1977) outlines in detail Departmental procedures for discipline. There are five possible levels: verbal reprimand, written reprimand, suspension of 1-10 days, suspension of more than 10 days, and discharge. Examples of conduct subject to disciplinary action in the booklet are indicative and not all-inclusive, but it might be noted that misconduct calling for up to level four discipline includes "any act that would bring the Canadian government into disrepute". This means that whenever any behaviour brings discredit to the post or the government, appropriate disciplinary action could be taken. As outlined above, discipline could accompany any of the other methods of coping with misbehaviour. Employees who have been subject to disciplinary action may seek redress through the procedures set out in the booklet The Grievance Procedure (Staff Relations Division, June, 1976). On a less formal level they may approach the Head of Mission or the appropriate personnel division at headquarters.

Rotationality

Some behavioural problems can limit the rotationality of the employee or raise issues of equity in treatment of other employees. For example, if it becomes clear that a rotational employee will not or cannot accept certain assignments abroad, then he may be requested to leave the rotational service. Rotational employees are expected to accept a fair share of hardship and undesirable assignments but some types of behaviour may limit postability, particularly to hardship posts. Such limitations could be unfair to employees who are fully rotational and who as a consequence could be faced with a greater proportion of hardship posts. This situation requires that at some point the employees who are not fully rotational may have to seek non-rotational positions within or outside the Department. As stated in the policy on rotationality (Circular Document 51/81 APO, October 23, 1981) the Department will provide time and assistance to such employees.

Administration

Several of the above-mentioned measures to deal with misbehaviour may be employed simultaneously e.g. counselling and medical treatment. However, since the problems usually involve misconduct, the major Departmental response would necessarily be discipline. It is, of course, always hoped that other measures such as counselling, medical treatment, reassignment or security reclassification will improve matters but it is absolutely essential that managers be completely aware that discipline may be unavoidable. If timely and appropriate discipline is not

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applied the supervisor or the Department may find it more difficult to solve the problem in a more advanced stage as it may be arguable that they have condoned the action or conduct. Thus in many instances the proper approach is a combination of measures including discipline in order to leave the employee in no doubt as to the seriousness of the situation and to give management the option for further measures.

Staff Relations (ABS) should be informed at an early stage of behavioural problems, attempts to solve them and results achieved. In cases of suspension, bargaining agents, depending on the contract for the group of employees of which the suspended individual is a member, may have to be informed. Because problems may affect careers, post operations and assignments, the relevant personnel operations division should also be informed. Specific problems may also involve other parts of the Department such as Security (ZSS), the Employee Assistance Program (ABDN) or the Welfare Counsellor (ABSW). Any of these units may be able to provide advice to managers. If behaviour affects performance this should also be reflected in the employee's appraisal.

Conclusion

When abroad employees of the Department must exhibit the highest standards of personal conduct to protect Canadian interests and to avoid offending local customs, creating security risks or otherwise harming the mission in its work. The Department attempts to deal with behavioural problems through

information, counselling, discipline, medical treatment, security reclassification and reassignment. Problems are dealt with confidentially and compassionately with a view to resolving them and protecting the individual's career and the Department's investment in its human resources.