EXPERTS IN ASIA

*An Inquiry into
Australian Technical Assistance*

A. H. BOXER

Although Australian aid to developing countries has grown tremendously over the last fifteen or so years, the effectiveness of such aid has never been properly investigated. This book is the result of the first study undertaken into Australian overseas aid and deals with the performance of Australian experts serving in Asia under the Colombo Plan, and the United Nations.

The book has been based largely on data derived from a questionnaire sent to experts in the field between 1954 and 1964. The author examines the success of technical assistance missions, where things have tended to go wrong, and the kinds of improvements that need to be made.

His work will be of great value to all those persons and institutions directly or indirectly associated with Australian overseas aid—officers of the Department of External Affairs and of the United Nations, voluntary aid bodies, past and present workers in Asia, aid administrators in other donor countries, such as New Zealand, and of course to Asian governments.

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A. H. BOXER

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Foreword

For the past twenty years the rich countries of the world have sought to help in the economic development of the poor countries through capital aid and technical assistance. All of them have found foreign aid a difficult and often frustrating experience. The very features of underdeveloped societies which hamper economic progress—traditional social institutions and attitudes, lack of skills and administrative experience—also constitute obstacles to the most effective use of foreign aid; and the apparent failure of aid in many cases to yield the hoped-for economic—and political—results has led to a good deal of disillusionment in the donor countries. One reaction in the donor countries has been the negative one of cutting back aid. Another, more constructive, reaction has been to study successes and failures in past aid programs in the hope that, by drawing on experience, it may be possible to do better in future. This book is a small contribution to this latter approach.

It has its origin in a grant made by the Ford Foundation to the Australian National University in 1964, part of which was earmarked for studies of Australia's experience as a foreign aid donor. Australia is a small country and its aid effort—outside its Territory of Papua and New Guinea—has added but a small fraction to the total flow of aid from rich to poor countries. But for well over a decade, mainly within the framework of the Colombo Plan, Australia has trained Asian students at its universities and colleges and has given technical assistance, as well as some commodity and capital aid, to its Asian neighbour countries. In addition to some nine hundred Australians who have been sent on technical assistance missions under Colombo Plan auspices, considerable numbers of Australian experts have undertaken similar work for the United Nations and its specialised agencies. It was decided to make the experience of Australian technical assistance experts in Asia the subject of one of the studies under the Ford Foundation grant.

As it developed, the study became a joint venture between the Australian National University and the University of Melbourne, with the latter contributing most of the skilled labour. Mr A. H. Boxer, Reader in Economics at the University of Melbourne, enjoyed the help of a number of colleagues in the fact-collecting stage of the work, but he was left with the whole burden of analysing the information collected and writing the report, a burden which he carried cheerfully amidst a full range of teaching and other duties. There is no need for me to say more here about the

procedures of the inquiry which Mr Boxer has fully explained in the Introduction. But it is proper that I should express to him my thanks for a demanding task admirably performed.

Next to him, my thanks go to Professors R. I. Downing, J. E. Isaac and H. Wolfsohn and to Dr A Hunter who shared in the interviewing work both in Australia and in the Asian countries. We are greatly indebted to several senior officers of the Australian Department of External Affairs without whose active and interested co-operation throughout the inquiry this report could not have been written. Similar help was generously given by the Representative in Australia of the United Nations Development Programme during most of the period, Dr V. A. M. Beermann. A word of appreciation to Mr G. C. Ford for research assistance and to Mrs N. Hempel and Mrs D. Freeman for coping with the typing. Thanks are also due to the University of Melbourne for granting Mr Boxer some months' leave to work full-time on this project and to the Australian National University Press for their role as efficient and helpful publishers. Last but by no means least, we gratefully acknowledge the financial assistance of the Ford Foundation which defrayed the cost of the undertaking.

H. W. ARNDT

Canberra
November 1968

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Introduction

THE COLOMBO PLAN AND AUSTRALIAN AID

In January 1950 a meeting of British Commonwealth foreign ministers was held in Colombo. The occasion was something of a landmark in being the first such conference convened in Asia and also the first attended by India, Ceylon and Pakistan as fully independent nations. The deliberations themselves proved even more momentous, for in the course of proceedings several of the delegates—notably Mr P. C. Spender, Australia's Minister for External Affairs at the time—spoke out strongly for a co-operative international effort to improve Asian living standards. The outcome was the formation of a Consultative Committee which held its first meeting in Sydney in May of the same year, with representatives from Australia, Canada, Ceylon, India, New Zealand, Pakistan and the United Kingdom. It was agreed in Sydney that the three Asian participants, together with the British territories of Malaya, Singapore, North Borneo and Sarawak, should each proceed at once to draw up a 6-year program of economic development to get some idea of resource requirements. At the same time machinery in the form of a Council for Technical Co-operation and a Bureau was established in Colombo to facilitate the exchange of expertise within the region, and a 3-year technical assistance scheme was approved. The Consultative Committee held its second session in London four months later to scrutinise the programs hastily prepared by the seven Asian nations and territories. A report was drafted suggesting that the two main obstacles which would have to be surmounted for the plans to succeed were the shortage of domestic capital and an inadequately trained work force. It was estimated that the countries concerned, in order to achieve the targets they had set themselves, would need approximately \$A4,700m. over six years, and that nearly half this would have to come from external sources including financial and technical aid. With the publication of this report, and the implementation of the Three-Year Technical Co-operation Scheme accepted at the Sydney meeting and now made co-terminous with the 6-year development programs embodied in

the report, the Colombo Plan for Co-operative Economic Development in South and South-East Asia—or simply the Colombo Plan as it is better known—came into being.

Initially designed to run for six years, the Colombo Plan has subsequently been extended three times and on present indications is likely to remain in force indefinitely. Indeed, the longer it operates, the more significant it has tended to become in certain respects. For one thing, the number of participating countries has multiplied, with the result that practically all nations in the area are now members and so too, in a donor capacity, are Japan and the United States. Secondly, while designed as a co-operative venture from the outset, the Plan's mutual character is more apparent today than it was ten or fifteen years ago because the developing countries themselves have become increasingly active on the aid-giving side. India, for example, sent only 26 of its own people on Colombo Plan missions to the end of 1958; over the next six years the number was 637—mainly to Nepal. Finally, the volume of aid supplied by the exclusively donor members has grown. Between 1958-9 and 1962-3, Australia's total contribution under the Plan amounted to \$A42.3m.; during the next 5-year period to 1967-8 the figure was \$A63.0m., nearly half as much again. In the area of technical assistance, in fact, the increase was about two-thirds—from \$A15.9m. to \$A26.7m.

Yet the basic character of the Colombo Plan has not changed greatly over the years. Although the following comment is from a 1961 publication, it could have been made equally appropriately any time in the past eighteen years:

The Colombo Plan has no supra-national authority and is not a master plan for the area: indeed it is not in the true sense a plan at all but rather the sum of the national plans of its Asian members. It does not interfere in the way in which each country works out its own needs and targets in the light of its own conditions. There is neither compulsion nor inspection nor accounting. Its meetings take no decisions on the planning or economic development of its members, and no one is bound by what it says. It merely offers a loose organisation by which both Asian development under national plans and also voluntary arrangements for mutual assistance between themselves or with one of the more developed countries outside can be made more easy and smooth, principally through friendly and informal discussion and contact.¹

This general picture of the Colombo Plan provides the setting for the present study which focuses attention merely on a small segment of the Plan's operations—small in the sense of being confined to Australia's role and then only to that part of it involving the sending of Australian

¹ *The Colombo Plan Story*, Colombo Plan Bureau, Colombo, 1961, p. 7.

personnel on technical assistance missions.² To the end of 1967, a total of 867 experts and advisers have undertaken assignments on behalf of the Australian government. A number of them have been abroad several times: all told, 1,174 separate assignments have been carried out or are in the process of being completed—some 11 per cent of the overall Colombo Plan figure. If we ignore ancillary equipment and certain miscellaneous expenses, the 867 experts in question have cost Australia \$A8.1m., which is 15.6 per cent of our outlay on technical assistance since 1950-1 and 5.2 per cent of our total contribution under the Colombo Plan (see Table 1).

Although Australian aid to Asia in the form of experts 'is truly a fraction of a fraction of a fraction', to borrow a phrase employed by Singer in a similar context,³ it nevertheless warrants serious attention on several grounds.

In the first place, the personal experiences of Australians who have been on such missions certainly provide the investigator with a rich and varied body of material. This alone may not be sufficient reason for pursuing our inquiry, but it is an important prerequisite.

Secondly, if Australia's overall effort in the area of foreign aid is to be effectively appraised and improved, the component parts of the aid program require examining in depth. The fact that we have chosen to concentrate on what, financially at least, is a relatively small component is in this sense immaterial. If and when all the pieces are eventually fitted together by somebody, our findings will, we trust, throw useful light on at least a few of the issues involved. It is worth mentioning at this point that another survey on broadly similar lines is now nearing completion. It is also being financed with Ford Foundation money channelled through the Australian National University, and seeks by means of sample analysis to trace the subsequent experiences of Asian trainees who have spent a period in Australia under Colombo Plan sponsorship.

A third reason for our undertaking, closely connected with the second, is that virtually nothing has so far been published on this or any other aspect of Australia's aid performance—certainly nothing by the Australian

² Such personnel will subsequently be referred to as 'experts'—not a particularly well-chosen expression but the one customarily adopted today. The Australian government makes a distinction between 'experts' and 'advisers'. The latter are individuals employed by the Australian authorities on brief fact-finding missions. 'Advisers' in this sense still come within the orbit of the Colombo Plan, and we therefore propose to ignore this distinction in terminology.

³ H. W. Singer, *Co-ordination of Technical Assistance and Development Planning: Determination of Priorities*, United Nations Technical Assistance Board, Addis Ababa, 1964, p. 2.

authorities. Not that this is so surprising; for as the President of the World Bank remarked in 1960: 'Recent history is full of instances where governments develop a rationale for what they are doing only after having done it for quite a while first. I suspect that this is the case with economic aid.'⁴ All the same, in the last few years a number of donor countries and

TABLE 1
Australian External Economic Aid, 1950-1 to 1967-8

Type of aid	\$Am.	Total aid %	Total aid excl. Papua-New Guinea %	Colombo Plan aid %
Colombo Plan				
Economic development (capital aid)	103.2	9.8	29.1	66.5
Technical assistance:				
Training	30.5			19.6
Experts	8.1			5.2
Equipment	10.2			6.6
Miscellaneous*	3.2	52.0	5.0	14.6
		155.2	14.8	43.7
Other bilateral programs	78.6	7.5	22.2	
Multilateral programs	121.2	11.5	34.1	
Papua-New Guinea	694.7	66.2		
Total	1,049.7	100.0	100.0	100.0

* This chiefly consists of administrative and incidental expenses (\$A2.7m.) but also includes contributions to various bodies such as the Colombo Plan Bureau in Ceylon, the Asian Economic Development Institute in Bangkok, the International Training Centre in Canberra and Australian Volunteers Abroad.

Sources: *Current Notes on International Affairs*, Vol. 36, No. 1, January 1965; *Budget Speech, 1968-69*, Statement No. 8; material supplied to author by External Aid Branch, Canberra.

organisations have started to become aware of the importance of *efficient* aid and to realise that a close examination of past performance is indispensable for planning improvements. By 1965, for example, the United Nations was sufficiently concerned about the little so far being done to appraise the results of its own technical assistance operations that as a trial measure it sent evaluation teams to Thailand, Tunisia and Chile to

⁴ Eugene R. Black, *The Diplomacy of Economic Development*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1960, p. 54.

examine the effectiveness of U.N. aid to those countries and to suggest possible changes in procedure. (Their findings are referred to a number of times in later chapters.) Then again, in the last four or five years the U.S. government and various private institutions have done a good deal of research on American foreign aid operations and the lessons to be drawn from the past. There has been nothing comparable in Australia, however, and it was this perhaps more than anything else that prompted us to conduct our own inquiry.

One final point. The 5.2 per cent figure previously quoted as the share of Australia's Colombo Plan aid devoted to experts fails to give a true indication of the importance of such expenditure. It hides the fact that the percentage has been rising in recent years owing to the growing importance of technical assistance as a form of aid. Although over the whole period technical assistance averages out at one-third of Colombo Plan spending (Table 1), in the five years 1963-4 to 1967-8 the figure is 46 per cent. Today in fact something like 8 per cent of funds is used to meet the cost of sending experts overseas. It is also necessary to bear in mind that a large part of the ancillary equipment, shown as a separate item in the technical assistance statistics and currently absorbing nearly 10 per cent of Colombo Plan appropriations, is directly used by experts—indeed is provided only because they have asked for it. Furthermore, statistics on their own do not give a true indication of the significance of technical assistance in general and of experts in particular. Improvements in the quality of human capital which technical assistance seeks to achieve are an essential pre-condition for the effective exploitation of physical capital and self-generating growth. As one writer puts it:

Economic development can take place if natural resources are poor, but it will not take place if people remain ignorant. Improvement in their human skills is basically the task of the underdeveloped countries themselves, and if they are to achieve it they must plan their education system carefully in the light of their growth aspirations. If the improvement is to be rapid, they will need to make extensive use of foreign skills and training to break through the constraints imposed by their low starting position . . . The rate of growth achieved will depend heavily on the investment effort, but the productivity of investment will depend upon the types of human skills available to exploit it.⁵

The value of experts' services, in other words, greatly exceeds the actual money outlay incurred. But this is likely to be so only if projects and the experts to handle them are sensibly chosen, and if adequate supporting measures are forthcoming in the operational and follow-up stages—issues examined in later chapters in the context of Australian aid.

⁵ Angus Maddison, 'The Role of Technical Assistance in Economic Development', *The OECD Observer*, No. 7, December 1963, pp. 20-1.

GATHERING EVIDENCE

The decision to inquire into the activities of Australian experts serving in Asia was taken in 1964. The desirability of approaching as many former experts as possible for source material at once became apparent, and our first action was thus to contact the Department of External Affairs to see if we could secure the names and addresses of all Australians who had been recruited for Colombo Plan work since its inception. To broaden our range of knowledge and provide some basis for comparison, we felt it would be desirable to incorporate into our study those Australians who had been to Asia with the United Nations. The U.N. Technical Assistance Board was therefore approached through its Sydney office with a similar request. Both bodies kindly agreed to co-operate and in due course we received the information sought.

The next step was to prepare a questionnaire which we proposed to send to the individuals on our two lists. The document finally produced occupied eight foolscap pages and consisted of five sets of questions:

- A. *Personal data*: age; country of birth; occupation.
- B. *Qualifications*: educational standard reached (degrees, etc.); positions held during working life; periods spent outside Australia and for what reasons.
- C. *Technical assistance assignments*: list of all assignments undertaken indicating the countries involved, starting dates, duration, sponsoring organisations, brief job description.
- D. *Most recent assignment*. (This together with E formed the core of the questionnaire.) The questions asked included: method of recruitment; reasons for accepting; what was done about submitting a final report; location of assignment; the host country institution to which attached; whether one of a team; the local person to whom directly responsible; name and address of counterpart and successor; nature of work; main activities and duties; whether accompanied by family; health; language obstacles; success rating of mission on the basis of (a) what was achieved at the time, and (b) what has happened to the project since.
- E. *General appraisal*. Experts were asked to append a statement, preferably of several pages, giving a qualitative evaluation of their experience. We suggested that they might care to cover some or all of the following points in their evaluation: appropriateness of technical qualifications; adequacy of briefing and of other preparatory measures; degree of co-operation from host country contacts; efficiency of host country administration;

authority, powers, obligations and restrictions while on mission; knowledge and understanding of local society and culture; and living conditions.

The first three groups of questions were straightforward and factual, but thereafter the information sought was largely in the nature of personal judgment. To facilitate processing of answers, a number of the later questions were thus of the fixed-choice variety, the expert being asked to signify which of several alternative responses most accurately described his own particular case. For example, under the heading of 'reasons for accepting assignment', four possibilities were listed—financial reasons; to gain professional experience or advancement; opportunity to travel; pressure from colleagues or superiors—with the additional instruction 'if for other reasons, please specify'. Again, when asking the expert how successful he thought his assignment had been, we presented him with the alternatives of 'most successful', 'moderately successful' and 'failure' (although we proceeded later, in the general appraisal question, to suggest that he might care to elaborate on his reasons for rating his mission as he had).

Having designed the questionnaire, we then went systematically through our lists of experts, deleting (a) all U.N. personnel who served outside the Colombo Plan region, (b) those whose present whereabouts were unknown, and (c) anyone whose most recent assignment was begun before 1954 (on the grounds that by now his memory would probably be hazy, his overseas contacts difficult to trace, and the results of his efforts virtually impossible to identify at the Asian end if we decided to follow them up). After pruning the lists in this fashion, 499 names remained—341 Colombo Plan and 158 United Nations—and a copy of the questionnaire was posted to each of these individuals in September-October 1964, accompanied by an explanatory letter and a reply-paid envelope. Eventually 242 completed questionnaires were returned (21 of them only after a letter of reminder). This was 48 per cent of those contacted—effectively 58 per cent if the 69 questionnaires returned unclaimed (address unknown or deceased) are deducted from the initial figure of 499. In view of the fact that the questionnaire was a postal one and rather lengthy, the rate of response was reasonably encouraging. It should perhaps be added that 11 individuals wrote to us declining to disclose information because they were too busy or did not approve of what we were doing; several of them said they would be prepared to submit to a personal interview.

Although by no means unhappy with the extent of the response, we were nevertheless a little concerned about the possible danger of bias creeping into our findings should the character of those who responded

and those who failed to respond differ in significant respects. We were able to do a certain amount of checking in this regard as some things were known to us about all 499 experts, such as the starting date of their most recent assignment, whether a Colombo Plan or U.N. appointment, the country of assignment, their Australian employer (government department, private firm, self-employed, etc.), and the field of their mission (education, health services, agricultural production, etc.). Comparing the rates of response against these known characteristics failed to reveal any clear evidence of bias. The response rate admittedly was higher under the Colombo Plan than under the United Nations, and for assignments commencing in the 1960s than for those commencing earlier, but in both instances the variation was no more than 3-4 per cent. And although the response rate varied in some degree according to country of assignment, type of employment in Australia and field of technical assistance, individual categories (e.g. small countries) frequently contained too few entries to be meaningfully interpreted. Among the more striking features, however, were the relatively few replies from experts who had been to Ceylon, Pakistan and Indonesia, and the particularly good response from teachers, educationalists and also from the self-employed.

But inevitably our data on those experts failing to respond did not extend to knowing how successful their assignments had been, and we thus had no way of telling whether our sample was a biased one in this vital respect. To complicate matters, it is difficult even to be confident about the probable direction of such bias. One can imagine less successful experts being reluctant to complete the questionnaire owing to their desire to forget the past, especially if they themselves were partly to blame for what happened. Equally, however, those with the unhappiest memories might welcome the opportunity of letting off steam, more particularly if they felt that other people were responsible for their lack of success. Some may have reacted the first way and others the second, thus tending to cancel things out. But this is purely conjecture, and largely for this reason we have tried not to place too much stress on the statistical side of our findings.

As the completed questionnaires began to flow in, it became immediately apparent that lack of material was not going to be a problem. An encouragingly high proportion of individuals had obviously taken the questionnaire seriously. Answers to the final question on overall evaluation indicated this most strikingly: many experts appended quite lengthy comments, sometimes running into five or even ten pages, spelling out their answers to earlier questions, supplying additional information, and providing a detailed assessment of their performance and how in retrospect things might have been improved. Indeed, the volume of written

matter submitted, and the fact that so much of it was of a qualitative kind that did not lend itself to mechanical processing, made us resolve to enlist the services of several of our academic colleagues for the next phase of the inquiry. Up to this point all the work had been done by Professor Downing and the author in consultation with Professor Arndt.

What we now did was to split the questionnaire material into a number of geographical areas, with each member of a five-man team assuming responsibility for one of the areas. Professor Isaac was allotted Malaysia (which at that time—late 1964—still included Singapore)⁶; Dr Hunter, Indonesia; Professor Wolfsohn, Pakistan and the northern part of India; Professor Downing, Ceylon and south India; and the author, the Philippines and Thailand, together with Burma and the Indo-China succession States (Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia). The idea was that each member, with an allocation of some 50 or so questionnaires, should pick out 15-20 likely-looking projects in his territory with two purposes in mind: (a) to interview (here in Australia) the experts concerned; and (b) to follow this up by visiting his Asian countries to check on the projects for himself and more generally to inquire into Australian technical assistance from the receiving end.

We realised it was going to be difficult in the time each of us would have—basically the three weeks of university vacation—to cover more than 9 or 10 projects apiece while overseas. This necessitated fairly ruthless selection, both in deciding which experts to interview in Australia and then in possibly halving those numbers. Looking back later, however, we were all reasonably satisfied with our final short-lists, bearing in mind that in the process of drawing them up we also learned a great deal about various projects which we did not have the time to follow up abroad.

Members of the team then proceeded to their Australian interviews, immediately encountering, of course, the problem of the great distances in this country. In the end, each member conducted all his own interviews in Sydney and Melbourne where the majority of experts resided; but in Canberra, Adelaide, Perth and Brisbane resources were pooled, each of these cities being visited by only one person who interviewed on behalf of his colleagues and reported the details to them.

A supplementary questionnaire was devised to ensure that attention at these personal interviews was focused on the kinds of issues we particularly wanted discussed. This second questionnaire was completed by the team member either during the course of the meeting or afterwards on

⁶ Singapore is listed separately throughout this report, even though for a short while (1963-5) it was part of Malaysia. When we refer to Malaya, as we do quite often, we mean the territory now officially known as West Malaysia which with Sabah (formerly North Borneo) and Sarawak make up Malaysia.

the basis of his notes. These interviews and the accompanying questionnaire proved most helpful in several ways:

(i) We were able to pick up useful information on certain matters not specifically covered in the postal questionnaire. Some of these matters probably should have been raised earlier; but it was only in the course of analysing the results of the first questionnaire that our attention was drawn to a number of important gaps in knowledge. Among the additional questions we put were these: (a) Did you have any difficulty obtaining leave from your job in Australia? Did your employer impose any time-limit on this leave and how strictly was it enforced? (b) How much time elapsed between your recruitment and arrival in the host country? (c) Were you satisfied with your terms of appointment (rate of pay, superannuation, provision for home leave, etc.)? (d) Who was responsible for thinking up the project? (e) What ostensibly was the purpose of your having a counterpart? Was this purpose achieved? (f) What equipment did you ask for while on assignment? Did you obtain it and was it received fairly promptly? If not, who was at fault? (g) What, if anything, do you know about the history of your project since your departure and the reasons for what has happened? (h) On your departure, what recommendations did you make about subsequent action? Have these recommendations been carried out?

(ii) Personal interviews also provided us with an opportunity of probing more deeply into certain issues already raised in the postal questionnaire but not pursued rigorously enough. For example, the various topics which previously we had suggested experts might care to say something about in their general appraisal—appropriateness of technical qualifications, adequacy of briefing, living conditions and so on—were now converted into specific questions. Furthermore, in an effort to come to closer grips with the meaning and significance of assignment success, we put the following searching questions to each individual interviewed: If your assignment had been ‘completely successful’, what would it have implied? How far short of ‘complete success’ was your assignment in fact? What were the most important factors determining the degree of success or failure of your assignment? If the results were far short of ‘complete success’, were the difficulties—in retrospect—such as to suggest that the project should not have been undertaken (or at least should not have been undertaken through foreign technical assistance)?

(iii) Advantage was taken of the occasion to test the reaction of experts to certain ideas and suggestions we had been thinking about. Thus we asked them to comment, on the basis not only of direct experience but also of observation of other missions, on: (a) the host country’s use of experts for political ends; (b) opposition to manual labour among

educated locals (and perhaps among experts from some countries); and (c) the unduly short duration of many assignments. We also sought their views on the desirability of an expert assuming duties prior to his predecessor's departure, and of paying a short preliminary visit to the host country a few months before actually starting his assignment.

(iv) The three varieties of questions so far mentioned could profitably have been put to all experts, had this been feasible. But in singling out certain individuals for personal interview, we primarily had our overseas visits in mind and wanted further information to aid our inquiries in Asia. The questions already referred to were largely designed for this purpose and also to serve as a guide in the final choice of projects worth following up. But in addition we confronted experts with several questions concerned solely with the Asian visits and aimed at establishing whom it was best to contact abroad. Our problem was a challenging one. It was not so much a matter of getting in touch with the government department or other authority currently administering a known activity. Rather it was one of seeking out the particular individuals who had dealt with an expert anything up to ten years previously and who might now be doing something quite different; and the project itself might now be defunct. It was thus imperative to get a lead from the experts interviewed on whom to see and how they could be tracked down.

The five of us (with help from Professor Arndt) interviewed some 90 experts in all States of the Commonwealth (except Tasmania) and managed to elicit much worthwhile material in response to the four kinds of questions just described. We approached these interviews with some trepidation, dealing as we would be with busy men no longer actively associated with the matters under investigation. We need have had no fears, however, for most of them were only too willing, some indeed almost pathetically eager, to talk about their past activities.

It is a common experience of returning travellers that no one really seems interested in hearing what they did or felt or thought while they were away. But in the case of technical assistance personnel, their frustration tends to be worse. They had been asked by their own country or by an international organisation of which their own country is a member, to go abroad and, in their own field of expertise, to help other countries which it was presumably thought desirable and good to help. They had for the most part done a reasonable job within the limits prescribed for them, often coming, in time, to identify themselves closely with their projects and with the countries in which they were working. They had a lot to say about what they had done and how things could be better organised in the future. Yet, when they arrived back in Australia,⁷ they

⁷ For further elaboration, see Chapter 10.

usually had difficulty getting aid officials to listen to them. When we therefore turned up inviting them to recount their experiences, they were obviously grateful for the opportunity. So anxious indeed were they to talk that it was difficult in many cases to conduct an orderly interview.

These personal meetings took place mainly in April and May of 1965, and in August of the same year the five of us departed overseas. The question arose beforehand as to how we should establish contacts promptly so as to make the most effective use of the brief time at our disposal. Since we were anxious to maintain our own independent academic status, we decided, if we could, to steer clear of formal approaches through the Australian government or U.N. authorities. Similarly, we wanted to minimise the risk of recipient governments denying us facilities to carry out our inquiries, so we also decided to avoid as far as possible making high-level approaches to Ministers and Permanent Heads in the countries to be visited. Instead, we endeavoured to arrange appointments with a number of the key contacts mentioned by experts, either by writing to them ourselves or alternatively by getting in touch with somebody already known to us there and requesting him to fix up appointments on our behalf. With a nucleus of contacts lined up in this fashion, we hoped that once we arrived these initial contacts would be able to help us find other individuals we wanted to see.

For the most part these arrangements worked well. Between the five of us, we managed to meet about 150 Asians either connected with the projects being followed up or associated with broader aspects of aid administration. In addition we talked with Australian embassy staff,⁸ U.N. officials, and a number of persons attached to donor institutions such as the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) and the Ford Foundation. Wherever possible we also paid a visit to the actual site of the projects being investigated to check results for ourselves. Local co-operation was generally excellent: although we were not always able to find out what we wanted, this was usually because the information was not available or because local officials were hesitant to say things they thought might offend us. The task was undoubtedly most difficult in Indonesia. This was in the period of Confrontation which made it necessary for Dr Hunter to pursue his inquiries extremely tactfully; further, with continuous reshuffling of personnel within and between government departments, tracing individuals in Indonesia posed very considerable problems.⁹

⁸ As a convenient abbreviation, the term 'Australian embassy' is used throughout this report to include the office of the Australian High Commissioner.

⁹ In anticipation of possible difficulties, it was decided not to visit Burma or the former French territories in Indo-China.

On returning to Australia, each member of the team proceeded to write up his findings, giving his general views on the efficacy of Australian technical assistance in the countries he visited and describing in detail what he had succeeded in discovering about the particular projects he set out to investigate. These findings have been carefully studied by the author, and many of the facts and opinions presented here can be traced back to the reports of team members.

However, several things still remained to be done. The first was to arrange for as much as possible of the data in the original questionnaire to be assembled in statistical form. This involved a good deal more than mere mechanical recording:

(i) A sizeable proportion of the most interesting and relevant information was contained in the answers to the final question asking the expert for a qualitative evaluation of his mission under a number of suggested headings (degree of co-operation from contacts in host country, etc.). But in contrast to several previous questions also involving personal judgment, no lead was given in the form of fixed-choice responses. Hence in order to determine whether an expert's experience under these suggested headings should be rated 'good', 'fair' or 'poor', his comments had to be closely scrutinised and a rating then made on the basis of the tenor of his remarks. This task was carried out by the author with the help of a graduate research assistant. As the size of samples in some of our tables testifies, we were quite frequently forced to withhold judgment altogether for lack of evidence. Many of the ratings were inevitably somewhat arbitrary.

(ii) With subjective questions of the fixed-choice kind, we endeavoured as far as possible to check the answers given by the experts against any later evidence brought to light in personal interviews and on the overseas visit; and when necessary, an expert's own rating was amended accordingly. Such amendment was for the most part confined to the question of assignment success, and then principally to success as reflected in developments since the expert's return to Australia. This mainly took the form of our giving the assignment a rating of 'most successful', 'moderately successful' or 'failure', whereas the expert had left the question unanswered through ignorance of subsequent events. (By the same token, when attaching our own set of ratings to the questions referred to under (i), we also took account of any information obtained in personal interview or overseas.)

The second remaining task—one that took a considerable time to complete—was to sift carefully through the detailed questionnaire comments with the two-fold aim of building up a better overall picture of the problems experts have had to face and possible solutions, and of selecting

from the vast array of material appropriate illustrations to amplify or reinforce the points we wished to make.

On returning to Australia, and more or less concurrently with the two tasks just described, we took the opportunity of extending our knowledge of technical assistance in several ways. In the first place, various people connected with the administration of aid at the Australian end were interviewed. They included officers of the External Aid Branch in Canberra, the Representative for Australia and New Zealand of the U.N. Development Programme, staff of the Department of Labour and National Service responsible for a good deal of recruiting, and the representatives of voluntary aid bodies. In the second place, we carefully examined the small but rapidly growing body of overseas literature dealing with the principles and procedures for evaluating technical assistance and with the findings of evaluation studies actually carried out.¹⁰

SCOPE AND CHARACTER OF REPORT

Before detailing the results of our inquiry, it is as well to say something in this introductory chapter about the factors influencing the scope and character of the study. Broadly they fall into two categories: limitations imposed by the data and the slant we have deliberately given our report.

On the matter of data, the first point to emphasise is that the bulk of the evidence is drawn from the two questionnaires. In consequence, the picture we present of technical assistance activities tends to reflect the expert's point of view rather more closely than it does the aid administrator's or the local counterpart's. We have tried not to let this affect our personal judgment; but it would be foolish to imagine that our heavy reliance on the questionnaires has not left its mark on the way we have tackled our subject and on the choice of illustrative material. The reason for sounding a note of warning in this regard is not that the expert is presented as the central figure—our terms of reference after all were to examine the role of the Australian expert in Asia—but that the expert's version of events is only one side of the story, and not always the most reliable. For example, on certain issues such as the subsequent history of projects, the general body of experts are unlikely to be so very well informed; while on other issues, such as those reflecting on their own capabilities, they may well be prejudiced in their judgment. Furthermore, harking back to earlier discussion, we cannot dismiss the possibility of a biased response to our first questionnaire, although there is no way of telling its magnitude or direction. From time to time in the following pages

¹⁰ A selected bibliography is included at the end of the report.

we shall be qualifying our remarks with a reminder of the limitations in data, but the point ought to be borne continuously in mind.

The time element must not be overlooked either. Our original questionnaire was sent out towards the end of 1964, which means that practically no direct contact has been made with experts whose assignments were completed after that date. Because of this, some of our observations may not be as pertinent today as they were in 1964—or in 1965 when we went overseas to inspect things for ourselves. More specifically, certain aspects of their experience which the experts in our sample were inclined to criticise would probably attract less attention from today's experts. There are two grounds for supposing this. First, things appear to have been getting better towards the end of the period covered by our survey: whereas 42 per cent of missions begun before 1960 were rated 'most successful' in terms of what was achieved at the time, the corresponding figure for the period 1960-4 was noticeably greater—50 per cent. In the second place, there is direct evidence that the administration of Australian aid has been strengthened in several respects in the last three or four years—too recently, in other words, to show up in the questionnaire. The External Aid Branch in Canberra has been enlarged and streamlined, and Colombo Plan administration at the various embassies is starting to be taken over by non-diplomats specifically recruited for the purpose. Some of the views expressed by experts which are recorded in later chapters may therefore be out of date by now. We have not tried to gloss over this in presenting our findings, and there are a number of references to post-1965 development especially in the final chapter. By the same token, however, it would be wrong to foster the impression that most of the difficulties which confronted experts five or ten years ago no longer exist. We imagine that a great many of the factors impeding assignment success in the late 1950s and early 1960s are still a source of worry and frustration.

A further feature dictated by the data is the essentially impressionistic character of our study. Although the questionnaires were our chief source of information, much of this material did not lend itself to statistical processing. And even when it did, we frequently could not vouch for its reliability, partly because of the subjective (and in some cases ambiguous) character of certain questions, partly because of the arbitrary element inevitably involved in the three-fold grading of assignment success, partly because we ourselves did the classifying in a number of areas, and partly because of the low response rate to some of the questions. Hence the tables in later chapters summarising the quantifiable evidence are not to be regarded as the focal point of the report. While the statistical material has provided us with useful leads in framing our criticisms and recommen-

dations, what we have to say is compounded of a series of observations and impressions derived from many different strands of evidence, many of them unquantifiable. A number of tables have nevertheless been included, but more often than not they are there primarily to illustrate or amplify an argument or to act as a starting point for discussion.

Now for a few words about the slant we have deliberately chosen to give the subject. The first thing to appreciate is that the author and all but one of the team assisting him are practising economists. While our investigations have certainly not been confined to economic questions, the fact of our being economists no doubt shows up in the handling of the material, if only perhaps in the negative sense that we have not dealt with issues of a psychological, sociological, political or technological kind as thoroughly and as assuredly as they would have been handled by individuals professionally trained in these areas.¹¹

Secondly, we have tended to approach technical assistance and its accompanying problems primarily from the donor's point of view rather than from the standpoint of the various recipient countries. The fact that so much of the material came from experts who customarily see things from the aid-giving side made this unavoidable to some extent. Moreover, as our object was to investigate a particular aspect of Australian foreign aid rather than development problems in Asia, it was always our intention to slant inquiries towards the donor.

Thirdly, although Australian experts serving in Asia on behalf of the United Nations were included in our study, this was done to widen our sample and to provide some basis for comparison rather than to give us an opportunity of investigating the technical assistance work of the United Nations or of suggesting how it might be improved. The United Nations in fact scarcely rates a mention in Chapter 2 on choice of projects, and in subsequent chapters attention continues to be chiefly focused on the experts recruited by the Australian government.

Fourthly, although choosing to rely heavily on illustrative material drawn from individual case histories, we were also anxious to ensure that facts and opinions cited could not be readily identified with a particular expert if this might embarrass or offend somebody. Usually when referring to an expert, therefore, we have deliberately omitted mentioning a significant characteristic about him—the country he worked in, for example, or the nature of his project—so as not to give too much away.

Finally, we ought perhaps to state openly here and now that personally we should like to see Australian aid to Asia extended, and that our

¹¹ The non-economist of the team, Professor Wolfsohn, is a political scientist and this was clearly reflected in the report he prepared after returning from northern India and Pakistan.

reasons are primarily humanitarian. This report, however, is not an attempt to argue the case for more aid but an examination of the efficacy of existing aid with the object of ascertaining whether present efforts are achieving maximum results. But we hope the report may in some small measure contribute indirectly to the expansion of Australian aid by increasing the public's awareness of the vital role which technical assistance is capable of playing in promoting economic development and raising living standards in Asia.

Project Initiation

Of all the factors bearing on the success or failure of technical assistance operations, none is more crucial than the initial choice of project. This is particularly apparent when the outcome of such operations is viewed in the context of the basic objectives of foreign aid and the extent of their realisation. For however assiduously an expert carries out the specific duties entrusted to him and however ably he is supported by the donor and recipient authorities, the impact of his mission will inevitably be slight if the whole venture is faultily conceived. For example, a project involving the installation of equipment and the training of local technicians to handle it may prove a failure in retrospect, not because the capital is badly installed or the technicians inadequately trained, but simply because there happens to be little or no demand for the equipment.

Even if we judge performance more narrowly in terms of the expert's immediate task, project selection is still important. Although the factors hampering assignment execution are unlikely to reveal themselves openly until the expert actually takes up his appointment, their origin can often be traced back to shortcomings in the selection and planning of projects. Thus owing to the vague or deceptive wording of the job descriptions on which their recruitment is based, experts sometimes find themselves doing work for which they are not properly qualified. Similarly, they sometimes have to make do with insufficient local staff and equipment as a result of the donor institution's failure at the negotiating stage to inform itself on these matters or to tie the host government down to a concrete program of supporting action. And even where the difficulties impeding assignment execution are unavoidable, if through careful evaluation they can be detected beforehand, the donor should be in a better position to decide whether to give aid at all and, if it does, to forewarn experts of the problems they may expect to encounter. It will thus be in a better position to ensure that technical assistance is successful in the narrower sense.

In this chapter, concerned as it is with project selection and its implications, we shall have occasion to interpret success both broadly and narrowly. However, the scope of our inquiry has been deliberately restricted in one particular respect. In line with what was said in

Chapter 1, we have chosen to view the issues involved primarily as seen by the donor—meaning mainly Australia. On many aspects of assignment performance, of course, the opinion of the donor and donee authorities is likely to coincide. Where their assessment of the situation will perhaps differ most markedly—and this should be kept in mind throughout this chapter—is on matters affecting Australia's own economic and political interests.

The principle insisted upon and constantly stressed by the Australian government—that requests for experts originate with the host country—certainly does not mean that Australia is powerless to influence project selection. (If this were so, there would not really be much point in judging proceedings from the donor's point of view.) The authorities in this country, after all, are free to accept or reject the requests they receive, whether such requests reach the stage of being officially transmitted to Canberra or merely involve informal contact with embassy staff to sound out Australian feeling. In addition, the donor authorities may be able to exert some influence on the kinds of project they are asked to assist, thus enabling them to play a more positive role in the selection process. We need to look closely at both these aspects of project initiation in the light of past experience and with the object of ascertaining how things might be improved.

THE VETTING PROCESS

It is obviously not always possible to identify precisely the combination of factors prompting the Australian authorities to accept or reject particular requests for technical assistance. But their decisions would seem to have been largely influenced by three types of considerations: the possibility of recruiting suitable experts, contribution to host country development, and the incidental benefits to Australia.

Recruitment

Perhaps the most straightforward consideration, and one certainly very much to the fore in the initial stages of negotiation, is the prospect of being able to attract suitable applicants for the posts in question. Occasionally the authorities in Canberra have undertaken to supply an expert and then have had great difficulty in finding somebody, thus making it necessary to withdraw their promised support or at least to seek a postponement of the starting date. More usually, however, requests have been turned down right away if posts were unlikely to be filled; alternatively, the final decision has been deferred pending further investigation of the recruitment position.¹

¹ These and related aspects of recruitment are considered more fully in Chapter 3.

The problem of locating suitable individuals is no doubt responsible, at least in part, for the comparatively modest role of the expert in Australian technical assistance.² Not only is scope for recruitment in this country limited by the modest size of the work force and the abundant job opportunities at home; in addition, as we point out in the next chapter, the authorities are open to the criticism of not having done enough to bring Colombo Plan service to the attention of important sections of the community.

It is also fairly clear that the pattern of Australian aid in the past has been partly governed by the availability of recruits. The assignments of some three-fifths of all experts (including those under U.N. sponsorship) who answered our questionnaire were connected with education, agriculture or health—fields in which Australia is relatively well endowed in manpower terms. Admittedly, these are fields in which one would in any case expect a fairly heavy concentration of requests for assistance, bearing in mind the needs of the developing countries. It is worth noting, nonetheless, that this fraction of three-fifths is a good deal higher than the corresponding global figure for U.N. experts of all nationalities.³

Economic Impact on Developing Countries

The primary object of sending Australian experts abroad under the Colombo Plan is ostensibly to assist Asian countries in their efforts to speed up economic development. This assistance may take a variety of forms, but most assignments lend themselves to classification under one of three headings according to the nature of the expert's contribution to host country development:

(i) Exploratory, fact-finding missions to discover and define problems and perhaps also to suggest broad courses of action.

(ii) Advisory missions connected with framing policy on defined problems. The planning of a country's economic development program falls into this category.

(iii) The implementation of policies or tasks formulated by the recipient government on the advice of its own administrators or of foreign experts under (i) and (ii).

Viewed in this light, the business of identifying areas of activity warranting technical assistance seems straightforward enough. Difficulties arise, however, once we cease dealing in generalities and consider the

² Whereas 39 per cent of technical assistance expenditure of all Colombo Plan donors between 1950 and 1964 was on experts, the Australian figure was only 16 per cent.

³ Roughly one in every two U.N. experts employed under the Extended Programme of Technical Assistance in the early 1960s was associated with education, agriculture or health.

problems the Australian authorities must face in evaluating specific requests for aid and in deciding whether one request has stronger claims than another. Let us look at some of these difficulties.

Some Problems First, it is hard to conceive of requests for experts that are not at least remotely or indirectly connected with economic development. The training of vocational instructors—the purpose of many Australian missions—would seem to qualify unequivocally as development assistance by reason of the part it tends to play in augmenting the local technical skills so important for economic growth. But what about the request, say, for somebody to train pre-school teachers? Although the link with development here is much more tenuous, it can nevertheless be argued that school and post-school attitudes—vital factors in development—are conditioned by pre-school experience.⁴ Again, in what way is the establishment of a television station or the training of administrators and technicians in broadcasting a contribution to economic growth? It may increase political stability, thereby assisting general development. It may also, of course, have educational possibilities; but there is no guarantee that it will be put to this use—and in any case there may be better ways of employing resources in education. On the other hand, once the host country has come to a firm decision to introduce television and expand radio facilities, having recourse to foreign experts means less diversion of local manpower away from jobs that are perhaps closely related to economic development. In this roundabout fashion, technical assistance may thus serve to promote growth.⁵

A second problem, especially for a small donor nation like Australia, is that however much care is put into vetting requests, the program of aid decided upon is not going to make any perceptible difference to growth rates in Asia—certainly no statistically identifiable difference. Hence, in evaluating past performance and planning future policies, the donor authorities must work very much in the dark as far as measuring the economic impact of their actions is concerned. But to infer from this that no general yardsticks are available for assessing the relevance of aid to host country development, and thus to conclude that project selection can never amount to anything more than a series of *ad hoc* judgments of an

⁴ One of the respondents to our questionnaire, it so happens, was a kindergarten specialist. She was in Singapore for three months in 1957 advising on the training of pre-school teachers.

⁵ Australian experts played a significant part in the early 1960s in helping to establish TV in Singapore; and an employee of the Australian Broadcasting Commission was attached to Radio Malaya for four months instructing in the spoken word. Australia has also been associated with the development of school broadcasting in at least two Asian countries—the Philippines and Thailand.

intuitive nature, would be to overlook two important considerations.

The first point to be borne in mind is that a number of Asian countries already possess overall development plans which their governments are endeavouring to implement, and that these plans offer some sort of framework of reference. Where this applies, it can be justifiably argued that the host country should be left to work out aid priorities on the basis of its own conception of development requirements and in the light of the political problems it faces. Whether Australia agrees to provide assistance, assuming that requests for aid have come through accredited channels and been approved by the local planning body, would then hinge on three considerations. One is Australia's capacity to provide the assistance being sought. Another is Canberra's assessment of the host country's ability to make effective use of the aid. This depends on the political stability of the country in question, the efficiency of its administration and the feasibility of using the aid for the purpose indicated. And finally there is the importance the Australian government attaches to such things as promoting goodwill.

In the second place, even in countries where there is no overall planning and therefore no established set of priorities to serve as guidelines, there is nevertheless one useful way of judging the impact of aid which can and should be put to the test before deciding whether technical assistance ought to be given. We are referring to the extent to which projects afford experts the opportunity of passing on their knowledge and skills to members of the local population and how far provision is also made to ensure that those benefiting from contact with experts will in turn pass on what they learn to others. This whole question of transmitting expertise is examined more closely in a later chapter on counterparts: for the moment we simply want to draw attention to the *self-sustaining* character of successful aid and the implications of this for prior evaluation. To quote from a U.N. report:

It is well known that certain types of economic activity possess a characteristic of growth to a greater extent than some other types. Economic 'capital' is one of these categories—it is a form of economic resource which has the characteristic of expansion and capacity for growth. Technical skills have the same characteristic. That part of the world which has possessed a high level of scientific, technical and organizational skills has developed at a faster rate than those parts of the world which have lacked these skills. Apparently the rate of development has something to do with the possession of these skills. These skills, in fact, seem to have a characteristic of geometric rate of expansion. Once they have been established in a society, given reasonable nourishment they expand seemingly of their own accord. . . . It is this quality of self-expansion which is involved in appraising the transfer of skills by way of technical assistance. The justification for technical assistance rests on such transferability. It is thus

seen that the tiny fraction of gross national product accredited at one time to technical assistance gives a misleading impression of its significance.⁶

We now turn to a third problem for donor authorities. Accepting that technical assistance should concentrate on improving local skills, the question still remains whether this is better done by sending Australians to work in Asia or by arranging for Asians to be trained in this country. In discussing this issue with officials and others both here and abroad, we encountered wide differences of opinion. The following, for example, were some of the arguments put to us in favour of sending Australians overseas: the building up of training institutions in Asia itself is likely to do more to hasten the day when the developing countries can rely on their own resources to satisfy their growing demand for skilled manpower; the kind of training Asians receive will be better tailored to their needs if this training is carried out in their own environment and under the kind of conditions in which the knowledge and experience acquired through such training will subsequently have to be applied; it is less expensive for a small number of Australians to work overseas than for a substantially larger number of Asians to be brought to this country; releasing individuals from their normal work for study in Australia disrupts employers' staffing arrangements to a greater extent than counterpart training and in-service courses conducted by experts on the spot; educational facilities in Australia are already overcrowded; and when trainees sent abroad return home, they often have difficulty readjusting to their former way of life.

This, however, is only one side of the coin. A number of other people with whom we spoke expressed a preference for training schemes in Australia. Among the points raised were these: however great the pressures on existing Australian educational institutions, the position is very much worse in the developing countries; highly specialised courses cannot be economically catered for on location; a trip away from home makes for greater self-reliance and encourages the trainee to extend his range of interests; although bringing students to this country may be more expensive, Australia's overseas reserves are likely to be less affected; the donor authorities are in a better position to ensure that technical assistance services are of a high standard if these services are actually rendered in Australia.

Such diversity of opinion largely reflects the variety of circumstances attending technical assistance. Take training courses, for instance. As far as communicating basic knowledge and skills is concerned, present

⁶ *An Evaluation of the Impact of the Technical Co-operation Programme of the United Nations Family of Organizations in Thailand* (Report of the Thailand Evaluation Team), United Nations, New York, 1966, p. 34.

thinking tends to favour employing experts because of the large numbers to be instructed, the necessity of gearing this instruction to local needs and the questionable merit of subjecting less skilled and relatively unsophisticated members of the work force to the traumatic experience of study in a foreign country. With senior personnel, however, these considerations carry much less weight, and it is therefore understandable that those favouring study courses in Australia have generally had advanced training in mind.

All the same, the views expressed have sometimes differed radically even on a common issue. Thus the deans of the medical schools in both Kuala Lumpur and Singapore were asked what they thought of the current practice of Australian doctors visiting Singapore to lecture and examine on behalf of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons and its sister body the Royal Australasian College of Physicians. Kuala Lumpur's dean was not particularly enthusiastic. He felt that in the long run the interests of Malaysian medicine were better served by giving more post-graduate doctors the opportunity of attending specialised courses in Australia and elsewhere. But in Singapore the feeling was different. The fact that the initial qualifying examinations of both Colleges could now be taken locally meant substantial saving of time and money for higher degree candidates who often failed at the first attempt and had to sit again some months later. The present arrangement made it possible for the initial hurdle to be jumped and re-jumped in Singapore with minimum dislocation of work and family life.

Assignment work overseas and training in Australia are not of course the only forms of aid: capital assistance has to be considered as well. And although it is not our intention to discuss the capital side at any length, two things require saying. In the first place, whereas the activities of experts and the training of Asians in Australia are similar in the manner in which they help to foster economic growth, contributing as they both do to improving the quality of labour resources, capital aid is concerned with a somewhat different aspect of the development problem—supplementing local savings.⁷ While the receipt of both kinds of aid—technical and capital—is necessary for balanced development, significantly enough nearly every Asian official with whom we raised the matter expressed a strong personal preference for capital aid. One reason sometimes given was that capital assistance has been on a much larger scale and therefore its impact has been correspondingly greater. It was widely felt as well, especially in India, that the low rate of domestic saving and investment

⁷ Ancillary equipment supplied to experts for instructional purposes—books, for instance—is classified with experts and training fellowships as part of technical rather than capital assistance.

was holding back economic development much more than was the shortage of local skills.⁸ A popular view, too, was that the actual transmission of capital aid was not accompanied by anything like as many problems for recipient countries. Employing experts, for example, involved host governments in a good deal of financial expense, and was in any case a chancy business as the calibre of foreign personnel tended to vary so enormously. (Such comments were rarely directed specifically at Australia and Australians.)

The second point is that experts and equipment, although associated with different aspects of the development process, often go hand in hand. Thus we find numbers of Australian experts being sent abroad to supervise the installation of equipment donated by Australia and to train local workers to operate and maintain this equipment.⁹ Here the choice of projects is likely to be governed primarily by factors on the capital side, particularly Australia's capacity to supply the equipment sought. Once these matters have been resolved, it is usually fairly clear what must then be done about supplying experts.

A fourth problem for the donor authorities in establishing suitable areas of technical assistance is to decide whether the host country, if it were to exert itself, could with its own resources of manpower effectively carry out the task for which aid is being sought. The request for an expert's services may be prompted by the recipient government's lack of confidence in its own capability or by its lack of drive; or the particular local body asking for assistance may feel that the advice of a foreign expert will attract more notice politically—a situation which has aptly been described as 'ventriloquism'. Should an approach for assistance be rejected if these circumstances are thought to prevail? This is not an easy question to answer in general terms: each case must be carefully judged on its merits when the relevant facts become known.

⁸ While there can be no disputing that certain countries like India are reasonably well off for trained labour—indeed too well off in particular fields—some local officials were probably influenced in their judgment by fear of job competition from experts or by excessive confidence in their own capacity to cope. A cynic might also be tempted to suggest that the preference for capital aid partly stems from the opportunities afforded for corruption.

⁹ For instance, between 1956 and 1962 three separate gifts of diesel buses were made by the Australian government to Indonesia—250 buses in all; and over this period six experts visited Djakarta to advise on various technical and administrative aspects of bus operations. Again, there was the case of the concrete pipe manufacturing plant for the expansion of the Karachi water supply. The materials and equipment for setting it up were provided by the Rocla Company as a gift from the Australian government, and between 1955 and 1960 a number of Rocla staff were sent under the Colombo Plan to help install the plant and start production.

Our survey of the problems connected with project selection would be incomplete if we did not make at least passing reference to one further matter. Assessing the likely impact of aid on host country development is complex enough in itself; how much more formidable, then, must be the actual task of evaluation, considering that Asian development is not the sole issue involved. We are thinking here partly of the constraining influence of recruitment, but more especially of the economic and political returns Australia hopes to reap from rendering assistance, a subject taken up later.

Some Solutions From the comments above, the more pessimistic-minded might be tempted to conclude that the vetting of requests on the basis of anticipated contribution to Asian development is such a ticklish business that the Australian authorities would be well advised to confine themselves to one or two considerations such as recruitment, promoting a favourable image of Australia overseas, and complying with the host country's scale of priorities. Factors such as recruitment and goodwill cannot be disregarded, it is true. If local priorities clearly exist they must be respected—indeed to ignore them, especially if accompanied by attempts to pressurise the host government into accommodating itself to what the donor thinks ought to be done, could well cause resentment and mistrust at the receiving end. But to let matters rest there is to ignore a number of other important steps the Australian authorities can and should take before agreeing to send experts overseas. These fall broadly into two categories corresponding to the distinction made earlier between the wider and narrower versions of assignment success.

The problems raised in the last few pages principally relate to assignment success in the wider sense, to selecting projects that are likely to be genuinely useful in terms of Asian needs. If such selection is to be soundly based, the difficulties alluded to must not be allowed to undermine the thoroughness with which requests are evaluated before acceptance or rejection, but should be regarded as something of a challenge. A conscientious effort certainly ought be made to collect and analyse whatever relevant data can be procured. For the more known about the host country—its political aspirations, administrative capacity, resource pattern, past performance and so on—and also the more known about the particular projects for which aid is being sought, the better placed will the Australian authorities undoubtedly be to size up the likely implications of their actions.

A piece of information which we have already suggested requires consideration is the relationship of the particular project to the host country's planning targets and priorities. This bears repeating. Nevertheless the case for ensuring that projects conform to overall development

plans can easily be overstated. In some situations—in Indonesia at the present time, for example—there is little sense in waiting for economic priorities to be clarified by a host government struggling to cope. Thousands of urgent projects probably exist, almost any one of them worth undertaking provided it is well thought out and properly handled.

Once it is decided that a project is sound in the broader sense, the question still remains whether the more immediate objectives of the proposed venture have a fairly good chance of being realised. Although this of course will primarily depend on what happens during and after the expert's stay, there are nevertheless certain things that may be done at the initial vetting stage to cut down the incidence of failure in the narrower sense:

(i) Before agreeing to requests from countries where economic planning is fairly well organised, it is normally advisable to find out whether the projects have the backing of the host country's planning body. This has already been mentioned, subject to reservation, in connection with wider issues: what we are now saying is that planning body consent may also be desirable to ensure smooth assignment execution. Without this seal of approval, an expert could have difficulty mobilising local resources during his mission; and it is much less likely that adequate follow-up measures will be taken after his return to Australia. Similarly, it needs to be ascertained whether the institution to which the expert will be attached genuinely desires his services—or at least is prepared to co-operate fully. As we shall see in Chapter 6, lack of local interest is one reason for projects failing in the past.

(ii) The donor authorities must be reasonably confident not only of the requesting government's *willingness* to support a project—the previous point—but of its *capacity* to do so as well. To this end, it is necessary that they be as fully informed as possible on a wide range of matters: for instance, the efficiency of local administration, particularly in the area of assignment operations; the calibre of the officials under whom the expert will be working and their standing with the politicians and top public servants; the prospect of securing suitable counterparts; and the likelihood of the host government being able to meet its share of expenses. At the same time, however, to counsel perfection by insisting that every conceivably relevant fact be considered in advance would be to countenance a situation where aid is so wrapped up in bureaucracy that projects never get under way at all. A compromise clearly has to be made between thoroughness of preliminary vetting and getting things done.

(iii) Finally, and in a sense merely to elaborate the two points already mentioned, requests should be treated sympathetically only if accompanied by sufficient information on the duties assigned to experts,

who the counterparts will be, the range of local facilities that will be made available, the follow-up action the host government proposes taking and so on. For unless such issues are clarified at the negotiating stage, experts may find themselves having to face up to all sorts of unforeseen difficulties after their arrival. Admittedly, no assurances written or verbal can completely guarantee that the host government will keep its side of the bargain, even though it may originally have every intention of doing so. Heavy calls are continuously being made on the limited resources of developing countries; and the governments of these countries, with the best will in the world, often find it hard to withstand the temptation to back down on some of their promises in the face of new pressures. All the same, the temptation is more likely to be resisted when specific undertakings have been given rather than simply vague assurances, if only because it places Canberra in a stronger position to press its claims. Moreover, negotiations based on a comprehensive knowledge of the facts have the additional merit of (a) helping the Australian and host authorities to appreciate better whether the schemes being proposed are workable, and (b) providing useful material for recruiting and briefing experts and for indicating what preliminary arrangements should be made at both ends before assignments get under way.

Criticism We have felt it necessary to draw attention to these points about initial vetting because unfortunately in the past this aspect of Australian aid administration has not been handled as satisfactorily as it might have. Several things are worth saying in this regard.

First, embassy staff in many cases have not been in close enough contact with the local administration or sufficiently well acquainted with local conditions to be competent to make a balanced preliminary appraisal before forwarding requests to Canberra for final decision. Being on the spot, they ought to be favourably placed to unearth a good deal of relevant information on prospective projects not contained in the formal applications themselves and unlikely to become known to the authorities in Canberra from any other source. Who, for example, was responsible for thinking up the project in question? Are the local planning body and the organisation to which the expert will be attached genuinely interested in what is being proposed? How far will the expert's field of operations overlap the work already being done by another donor agency? Have the people with whom the expert will be working the reputation of being efficient and easy to get on with? Unfortunately such questions have all too often been ignored. The embassy officials with whom the experts in our survey had dealings were career diplomats, generally having neither the qualifications, inclination nor time to delve deeply into aid problems. With greater use now being made of professional administrators, the

picture is beginning to change, although at the embassy end there are still many diplomats involved in aid work.

Secondly, prior evaluation has not always been thorough enough in Canberra either. This is hardly surprising in view of what has just been said about the paucity of information channelled through the embassies, although the fault is largely Canberra's in not issuing firmer instructions to its overseas colleagues about supplying material. Nor is it surprising, bearing in mind that at least until recently, the External Aid Branch in Canberra has been seriously undermanned and entirely staffed at the more senior level by career diplomats temporarily seconded from other duties. An offsetting factor, admittedly, has been the practice of referring requests to persons professionally qualified to offer an informed opinion. It is not uncommon for the authorities in Canberra to consult with such bodies as CSIRO, the Commonwealth Office of Education, the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, the Australian Broadcasting Commission or the agriculture department of one of the Australian States; and while recruitment prospects are sometimes the point at issue, advice on other aspects of aid submissions has frequently been sought as well. Occasionally, too, somebody has been assigned to pay a brief visit to an Asian country to investigate an application at close quarters and report to Canberra on its feasibility.¹⁰ (Such visits, however, have usually been concerned with capital projects.)

Yet seeking professional advice, highly desirable though it undoubtedly is, cannot supply answers to all the questions thrown up at the vetting stage. It is also important to know, for example, how similar Australian ventures have fared in the past. Here, as we shall see in Chapter 10, disappointingly little appears to have been done; in particular, the reports of former experts have not received the attention they deserve. Again, if evaluation in the wider sense is to be effective, then the authorities in Canberra should be thoroughly conversant with the workings of Asian economies, especially with those features bearing on the problems of growth. It has been suggested to us that the Australian government ought to establish a research institute on Asian studies, one of the tasks of which would be to feed the External Aid Branch with background data to assist in project selection. Personally we doubt whether this is warranted. The problem at the present time is not that too little research is being done on Asian affairs: in fact an enormous stream of material on the subject is steadily pouring forth from all parts of the world (including

¹⁰ We have heard it said by way of criticism of on-the-spot evaluation that the Australian government has been rather too inclined to appoint individuals whose views were known to tally with its own, the operation being little more than window-dressing.

Australia). The basic trouble is that External Affairs employs far too few people to survey and digest material as it comes to hand. What is most needed is a larger research staff within the Department itself. There may, it is true, be a case for a different kind of institution: one that undertakes project evaluation, perhaps on a contractual basis, like the Stanford Research Institute in the United States or the National Council in India. This could nevertheless prove fairly costly, and it might be wiser instead for External Affairs to consult more with informed individuals in Australia. This already happens, of course, but the practice could profitably be extended and formalised, for example through the setting up of advisory panels in various fields of expertise, the members of which would be called upon from time to time to evaluate particular requests—and perhaps recommend suitable experts.

Finally, the donor authorities at both the Asian and Australian ends do not appear to have taken a strong enough line with host governments about the setting out of requests in sufficient detail. Job descriptions, for example, have too often been couched in vague and misleading terms, and the same is true of counterpart and equipment arrangements (see Chapters 3 and 4). In this as in other respects, project initiation seems to have been better handled by the United Nations: this at least is our general impression from a fairly cursory examination of U.N. practice. Critical references to prior evaluation in published reports of that organisation¹¹ suggest that, while its vetting procedures are certainly not perfect, the U.N. authorities have been alive to this fact and anxious to do what they could to rectify the situation.

Australia's Own Interests

No one we imagine would deny that the level and pattern of Australian technical assistance has been, and will continue to be, affected not only by the availability of experts and the needs of the developing countries but also by a number of considerations bearing on Australia's national interest. Not that helping to foster economic growth abroad and acting in self-interest are necessarily incompatible. A more prosperous Asia, indeed, is almost certainly an advantage to Australia in the long run, as far as both export markets and the political stability of the area are concerned. All the same, the national interest has unquestionably exerted some independent influence on Australian aid policy, modifying the level and pattern of technical assistance that would have evolved had Asian economic development and the recruiting of experts been the only relevant issues.

The advantages to Australia of aid-giving are partly economic and

¹¹ Report of the Thailand Evaluation Team, pp. 44-6.

partly political. Ignoring the effects on Australian export trade of higher living standards in Asia—effects too dispersed and delayed to be meaningfully related to particular aid projects—we have the following economic gains to consider:

(i) Improvements in host country facilities as a direct consequence of technical assistance may benefit Australian organisations that have occasion to use those facilities. It is difficult to say how far the choice of projects has been swayed by this factor—probably not very much. We know of one case, however, where it undoubtedly was a major influence. A number of Department of Civil Aviation staff were recruited a few years ago to help run Singapore's international airport after the departure of the British. The Department from all accounts was only too pleased to co-operate, anxious as it was to ensure efficient stop-over arrangements for Qantas flights. A similar motive may also have been partly responsible for Australian involvement in several other civil aviation projects—the installation of air navigation aids in Indonesia, for example.

(ii) It is sometimes claimed that foreign aid can be a useful way of making initial contact with new and potentially profitable markets. But our own inquiries failed to bring to light any real evidence that the Australian authorities have allowed trade promotion to affect their judgment on whether particular requests for technical assistance should be approved or rejected. Only one expert in fact broached the subject with us, and his argument was that Australia had not been doing enough to link trade with aid. He pointed out that nations such as Japan and West Germany were already using their foreign aid programs to strengthen trading ties with developing countries and that Australia would have to do likewise if it wanted to gain a foothold in Asian markets. But there were several things this expert failed to mention. First, too much attention to the commercial advantages of aid is a sure way of alienating local goodwill, a point brought home to us in conversation with local officials. Secondly, capital and commodity aid offers much greater scope than technical assistance for building up trade links.¹² Thirdly, if aid is to be effectively exploited to this end, subsequent follow-up action is just as important as initial choice of projects. Finally, a possible obstacle to an effective tie between Australian aid and trade policies is the fact that one is administered by External Affairs and the other by the Department of Trade and Industry. However this is certainly not an insuperable obstacle, as the experience of a country like Japan testifies.

(iii) A further aspect of economic self-interest, not unrelated to the

¹² For example, the recent gift to Indonesia of a milk-processing factory is obviously closely linked with the promotion activities of the Australian dairy industry.

point just mentioned, is that certain projects may be chosen because the ordering of aid equipment is expected to give a fillip to particular Australian firms which the government is anxious to assist.¹³ Our investigations disclosed no evidence of this either, but as already indicated we have examined capital aid only so far as it touches on experts and their duties.

(iv) Technical assistance work affords Australians an opportunity of acquiring useful job experience. However, while this is frequently recognised by experts themselves as a motive for accepting appointment (see Chapter 3), there is no evidence that the Australian authorities have let it influence their own judgment. In contrast, the Overseas Service Bureau—an organisation for recruiting and training volunteers for work abroad under private sponsorship—does tend to lay considerable stress on the benefit to the individual participants. But the kind of benefit that chiefly interests the Bureau in this regard is not the economic return in professional experience but rather the broadening and deepening of individual awareness of the developing countries' needs and the fostering of international goodwill through personal contact—much more matters of social and political responsibility in the widest sense.¹⁴

Australia's own economic interests, then, do not appear to have played a significant role in aid deliberations affecting experts, except perhaps in the isolated case. The situation is quite different, however, when we turn to the political side where the tie with aid has obviously been very much closer. This has tended to manifest itself in three major ways:

(i) Promoting a favourable impression of Australia in Asian countries seems to carry a great deal of weight with the donor authorities, something that aid officials themselves are quite prepared to admit. One consequence is the reluctance at times to turn down requests through fear of offending host governments; another is the preference for projects with potential publicity value. We shall be returning to these matters shortly.

(ii) Strengthening a country economically by supplying it with aid may be expected, at least indirectly, to strengthen it politically and militarily as well. It is clear, particularly from a breakdown of Australian aid by country of destination, that the authorities have not been blind to such

¹³ Although only a suggestion and concerned with manpower rather than equipment, the proposal to keep the staff of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Authority intact as work on the Snowy project is phased out, by sending teams of employees on overseas assignments, illustrates the kind of thing we have in mind here.

¹⁴ Since the ratio of Asians invited to Australia under the Colombo Plan to Australians going abroad is approximately seven to one, in practice far more personal contact between Asians and Australians has been achieved through training schemes in this country.

considerations. Hence the disproportionate amount of assistance to Malaysia, a traditionally close ally, the very large civil aid program in Vietnam, and the recent resumption of aid to Indonesia on what is likely to be a substantial scale.

(iii) In some instances the aid supplied by Australia has been of more or less direct strategic importance. This is most openly so with assistance under SEATO.¹⁵ But even some Colombo Plan projects have been of immediate strategic as well as economic importance, a fact almost certainly recognised when the aid was approved. The construction of feeder roads in north-eastern Thailand is a case in point. Largely identified as an Australian project, with Colombo Plan equipment and personnel, the building of these roads was partly designed to facilitate the speedy deployment of troops in the event of border trouble.

There is no way of gauging just how far Australia's foreign aid program has paid dividends on the political side, although it is debatable whether the friendship of the developing countries can ever be successfully bought with aid—or at least with aid by itself. Being a small nation and hence a modest donor, Australia is favourably placed in one sense: what it does by way of assistance is unlikely to be seen by Asian countries as a threat to their political and economic autonomy and therefore unlikely to cause much resentment. But by the same token, a nation of Australia's size can hardly expect its technical assistance program to yield substantial positive returns either.

While our guess would be that Australia's political interests in Asia have probably been reasonably well served by its aid policies, we have the feeling at the same time that attention to political considerations may have adversely affected the vetting process judged from the standpoint of the economic needs of the developing countries. A cursory examination of three of the most widely criticised features of Australian aid lends weight to this impression:

(i) Brief reference has already been made to the possible ill-feeling that the rejection of requests could arouse overseas and to Canberra's desire not to give offence. This combination of factors goes some way towards explaining the rather superficial character of so much Australian aid-vetting in the past. This was brought home to us in discussion with one or two Asian officials, franker than most, who complained that Australia was rather too inclined to agree to requests out of a sense of

¹⁵ Australian economic aid under SEATO, which in 1967-8 amounted to \$A2.5m., is not dealt with in this report. But it is worth recording that a training course in vehicle maintenance run by an Australian army team in Thailand under SEATO's auspices was described to us by aid officials in Bangkok as one of Australia's most effective technical assistance projects in that country.

benevolence or as a gesture of friendship without first investigating the merit and practicability of the proposals. To rely exclusively on the host country's judgment in such matters, we were told, was too high a price to pay for goodwill. Although every effort was made by recipient governments to screen requests carefully before their submission, a further check by the donor party in as tactful a manner as possible was warranted in order to iron out any remaining weaknesses and to enable the aid-giving authorities to build up a more complete picture of what they could be letting themselves in for. In fairness to Australia, however, we should add that in the opinion of some of our Asian contacts, and incidentally of several embassy staff as well, Canberra was now more thorough than formerly in its approach to initial evaluation. It was not only extending its inquiries further but was becoming more insistent that the relevance of aid to economic growth in the host country be clearly demonstrated.

Concern to please, it must be stressed, is not an incidental blemish in the administration of Australian aid, but a fundamental principle of government policy stemming from the idea that aid is an arm of diplomacy and that the national interest requires that we keep on good terms with our Asian neighbours. This admittedly is not a peculiarly Australian attitude. The desire to give recipient countries what they want but at the same time ensure that most effective use is made of aid is a universal dilemma inherent in the whole concept of inter-governmental aid. The ideal solution is of course quite impracticable: we need Asian governments whose judgment on aid priorities and whose capacity to administer aid efficiently leave nothing to be desired.

This dilemma, nonetheless, is particularly evident in Australia's case because her idea of aid as a tool of diplomacy is so deeply ingrained in official thinking. A number of other small countries—Sweden and Switzerland, for example—tend to regard aid much more as simply a means of assisting poorer countries to develop, any benefits accruing to the donor nation being only in the more general form of international goodwill. Probably what more than anything else distinguishes Australia from so many donor countries including the United States and Great Britain, and helps to ensure that the goodwill aspects of aid-giving (and the political side generally) are always well to the fore, is the fact that aid is under the wing of External Affairs rather than being in a department on its own.

(ii) Anxiety to please probably has a significant bearing as well on a second feature of Australian aid frequently under fire. We are referring to the tendency for assistance to be spread thinly over a wide area¹⁶—in terms of both countries and projects—so that, in the words of one senior

¹⁶ It is true of course, as already pointed out, that a substantial proportion of

official in Canberra, 'everybody gets something'. The principal manifestation of this, as far as the technical assistance side of aid is concerned, is the preference the Australian authorities have shown in the past for one-man assignments over more sustained and integrated projects staffed by teams of experts. (One merely has to glance through Australia's annual aid reports to be made aware of this. These reports, as one critic has put it, 'reflect an excessive fascination for the number of individual experts and assignments, and the cost of equipment supplied to different countries for different purposes'.)¹⁷ Although the wide dispersion of assistance is largely the consequence of Australia's failure to plan its overall aid program in systematic fashion and more specifically, as we shall see later, of its reluctance to enter into advance commitments or to prepare a shopping list of available expertise, there can be little doubt that the desire to please has been a contributing factor. But whatever the explanation, the significant thing is that Australian aid has been fairly thinly spread, thus reducing its economic impact in the view of the many who believe that aid in depth is usually of more lasting benefit to the developing countries.

(iii) Dispersion of aid is not necessarily incompatible with a bias towards more sustained and integrated ventures, provided the authorities are prepared to collaborate extensively with other donor agencies in a variety of jointly-sponsored schemes. Indirectly this is what happens when assistance is channelled through a multilateral organisation like the United Nations, but Australia has shown a marked disinclination to become deeply involved in similar arrangements as far as bilateral aid under the Colombo Plan is concerned. One reason perhaps is the fear that participation in co-operative projects may restrict Canberra's freedom of action, particularly if it means committing Australian support over a number of years. To some extent, however, this attitude probably stems from the belief that aid would be less identifiably Australian if it was merged with aid from other donor countries and hence less effective in promoting goodwill towards Australia.

INFLUENCING REQUESTS

So far in this chapter we have been analysing project selection as if

aid has gone to a few countries and that this in turn is partly to be explained in political terms. But the remaining countries have all received something, although in some cases little more than token amounts, and it is in this sense that assistance may be described as thinly spread geographically. The wide dispersion of aid between various undertakings within a country, however, is the more contentious issue.

¹⁷ K. W. Taylor, 'Towards a New Foreign Aid Policy', *Australian Outlook*, Vol. 19, No. 2, August 1965, p. 135.

Australia's only role is the essentially subsidiary one of vetting applications wholly thought up by the host countries themselves. This is not the full story in practice, however, for it takes no account of the part the donor authorities can and actually do play in influencing Asian governments to turn to Australia for assistance.

To complete the picture, let us first list some of the principal reasons why Australia has been approached in the past to make experts available:

(i) Day to day contact between embassy staff and local administrators affords a useful opportunity of exchanging ideas and suggestions from which specific proposals on aid may evolve. Thus shortly after educational broadcasting was introduced in Thailand, the Australian ambassador there was interviewed on radio, and in conversation afterwards made the passing comment that Australia might be interested in doing something to assist Thailand in the field of educational broadcasting. This chance remark was followed by a series of conferences, the upshot being that several local staff were invited to Australia, radio equipment was sent to Thailand, and several employees of the Australian Broadcasting Commission spent a period of time working in Bangkok.

(ii) It is inevitable that host governments, in the course of shopping around between various donor institutions, should from time to time approach the Australian authorities to see if they might perhaps be interested in assisting particular ventures. But unless local officials and embassy staff are in close and continuous liaison as described under (i), such occasions may be fairly infrequent and very much hit-or-miss, with requests being put to Australia only after everybody else has knocked them back. It is our impression that this all too often is what actually has happened.

(iii) In some instances Australia is known by the requesting nation to have had special competence in a particular field of expertise. For example, when in 1962 the Indian government was looking for somebody to advise on eucalyptus-growing, 'an expert was naturally sought from Australia' we were told. Similarly, we understand that Ceylon's action in securing an Australian to deal with sugar cane diseases was prompted by the knowledge that Queensland had already managed to eradicate several of these diseases and was successfully controlling others. Again, Australia and Japan were apparently chosen to assist Singapore in establishing a television service because both countries had only recently been through this experience themselves and were therefore presumed to be well acquainted with the difficulties involved. As a final illustration—not a matter of special competence in quite the same sense—we may note that one of the chief reasons for Australia being invited to carry out several assignments connected with patent systems and customs duties is said to

have been the host country's preference for experts from a small country, since there was less danger of the commercial information acquired by its experts in the course of their assignments being subsequently exploited to the detriment of the host nation.

(iv) Professional contact between Asians and Australians lies behind a number of the approaches made to this country for technical assistance. Thus the head of the Lignite Authority in Thailand for many years was an Australian who continued to keep in close touch with former colleagues in Victoria; when on-the-spot advice was required, therefore, he had often specifically asked the Thai authorities for an Australian expert. So too the personal acquaintance of a senior Australian surgeon with members of the Singapore Faculty of Medicine appears to have been responsible for initiating the negotiations which eventually led to the first team of Australian lecturers and examiners visiting Singapore on behalf of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons. These two illustrations will suffice for the time being; but we shall be returning to the subject in the next chapter when dealing with particular experts and how they came to be recruited. One point worth adding here, however, is that in some instances—the Singapore medical case, for example—the whole concept of the project and not merely the idea of seeking Australian backing seems to have originated in this fashion.

(v) As mentioned earlier, the Australian authorities, before finally committing themselves to supplying aid, have sometimes sent an expert to the host country to assess the situation and report back. When, for example, the Philippines some years ago asked Australia for equipment for milk research, the Australian government arranged for a dairy technologist to pay a short visit to Manila to investigate the application first hand. The employment of experts for purposes of this kind, although normally requiring host country approval, is almost entirely a matter of Australian initiative and in this sense falls into a rather special category. But the original requests vetted by such experts stem from the host countries themselves, so that the question still remains as to why Australia should have been the country approached for assistance.

(vi) A variation of (v), although far less common, is when an Australian is entrusted with the job of visiting one or more Asian countries on the look out for projects that might be of interest to Australia. Where the person concerned returns with certain suggestions that are passed on to the appropriate governments by the Australian authorities and are eventually translated into specific requests for assistance, then we are justified in crediting Australian initiative both with thinking up the projects and with the channelling of the requests to this country. Not that many assignments have actually been mooted in this

way so far as we can ascertain. Perhaps a partial explanation is that these exploratory trips have occasionally been undertaken by External Affairs officers who, from all accounts, have tended to come up with somewhat fanciful and impracticable schemes.

The discussion so far—apart from point (ii)—has centred on the direct and indirect ways in which Australia has managed to influence the requests it receives. Unfortunately, however, several things have tended to diminish the effectiveness of Australian participation in initial proceedings.

In the first place, as already pointed out and referred to repeatedly throughout this report, inadequate liaison between embassy staff and local officials has robbed Australia of a good deal of the influence which as a donor nation it probably could have exerted in the field of project initiation. When travelling through Asia, for example, we were told time and again how much more impressive was the network of contacts of such donor bodies as American AID and the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations which operated permanent and efficiently-run field offices. But criticism along these lines needs qualifying in two respects.

(i) There is always the danger in putting pressure on local administrators that the donor's efforts will be viewed as a presumptuous attempt to foist experts on to the host country. We heard FAO repeatedly criticised in Malaysia, for instance, for trying to persuade local departments to accept the type of aid which the agency wanted to promote. Officials in Kuala Lumpur were not anxious to be caught up in schemes conflicting with the existing program of priorities, and resented being told what was good for them by an outside body like FAO. (Yet if Asian economies are to be assisted to the full, it may at times be necessary—indeed highly desirable—for the donor authorities to intrude their own judgment as to what should be done, as long as they go about it in the right way. That Australia is rarely criticised for trying to interfere is of course due in no small measure to the Commonwealth government's persistent adherence to the diplomat's view of aid.)

(ii) One also has to recognise that embassies have not been uniformly remiss about establishing contact with the local administration. Admittedly, a universal problem is that embassy staff have had plenty of other work to keep them occupied and in any case have been more interested in the diplomatic side of their careers—a state of affairs beginning to change as already mentioned. Even so, some embassies have certainly shown more enterprise than others, apparently because there happens to have been one or more staff members with a special interest in this side of their duties.

In the second place, awareness of the time taken by Canberra to process requests and subsequently to recruit suitable experts, may in some

instances have deterred host governments from turning to Australia for assistance. Nevertheless, we do not wish to make too much of this point. For one thing, the bulk of criticism about delays has been levelled at capital aid rather than technical assistance. Also, it is doubtful whether the time-lag—typically 6 to 12 months—between the lodging of requests in Canberra and the arrival of experts to take up their appointments is unduly long by donor standards, not at any rate by those of the United Nations.

Thirdly, in the view of a number of Asians we met—and Indians were well to the fore here—an important manifestation of Australia's lack of initiative deterring host governments from seeking help from us in any systematic fashion has been our unwillingness to enter into advance aid commitments. Being unsure how long Australian aid would be continuing, Asian nations have been reluctant to turn to Australia to assist in the more sustained and integrated types of projects, and as a result the approaches that have been made have tended to be sporadic and largely confined to activities on the periphery of national plans. The ideal form of aid-giving, it was suggested, was for the donor country to accept long-term responsibility for particular developmental projects. While there is a good deal of substance in this criticism—after all, even a small nation like New Zealand is prepared to commit some of its aid in advance—we need to bear in mind that the attraction of long-term commitments is largely on the capital side. There is also the drawback, as spokesmen in Pakistan and India have pointed out, that donor countries are sometimes unable to fulfil their promises, thus causing disappointment and ill-feeling in local circles. Moreover, the effectiveness of advance aid commitments is lessened if host countries themselves revise their economic plans, as not infrequently happens.

Finally, the efficacy of technical assistance might well be increased if this country was to follow the lead of a number of other donors in drawing up a shopping list, based on recruitment potential, indicating the areas of expertise in which Australia is willing to give assistance. This has never been done, and there is no evidence that the authorities have ever thought seriously about preparing such a list. The advantage of this arrangement is that recipient governments would be in a better position to judge when to turn to Australia for help with reasonable certainty of receiving satisfaction; and the drawing up of such a shopping list might induce Canberra to take overall stock of Australia's potential aid resources and their most effective use—something that should have been done a long time ago.

One recent development, however, could in time prove an effective substitute for a shopping list of a more conventional kind, at least in some

areas of expertise and in dealings with some recipient countries. We are referring to the Registry of Experts' Services set up by the Asian and Pacific Council (ASPAC) at the suggestion of the Philippines. The main aim of the Registry 'is to bring together information about the relatively large body of scientists, engineers and technologists in ASPAC countries, so that member countries in need of special skills for development can readily obtain information about groups or individuals who might be in a position to help them.'¹⁸ The Registry only came into being in 1968 and it is too soon to say whether its main aim will be realised. But the Registry is located in Canberra with an Australian in charge, and one would hope that in due course it will come to be used extensively by individuals, institutions and governments in Asia to discover what Australia has to offer by way of technical assistance. One would also hope that the Australian government, which has agreed to finance the scheme for an initial period of three years, will take advantage of the Registry to inform itself more fully on the kinds of aid projects Australia is most qualified to support.

Advance aid commitments and the circulation of a shopping list would also put pressure on the Australian authorities to indicate the areas of technical assistance in which they are willing to grant aid in depth. This brings us back to what we said earlier about the proliferation of one-man assignments, probably the feature of Australia's aid program attracting most criticism at least a few years ago. The trouble with sponsoring a widely dispersed range of small-scale ventures is that aid given in this way is unlikely to have as lasting an impact as a more concentrated effort, and is certainly harder to supervise at the execution stage and in the follow-up period. Preference for aid in depth, of course, should not preclude a sympathetic response to *ad hoc* requests for experts to carry out particular tasks for which Australia is known to have special competence. Thus Singapore's appeal for a rain-making expert some years ago was prompted by the urgent need to overcome an unprecedented drought that had reduced water supplies to a dangerously low level. The expert bombarded clouds for several weeks but it is doubtful whether the relief from the drought was his doing. Yet it was a gesture keenly sought and for this reason probably worth making.

We should therefore not like to see the end of one-man missions, some of which have been conspicuously successful. But more emphasis on aid in depth would almost certainly produce greater and more lasting returns as far as Asian growth is concerned and would also be easier to

¹⁸ *An Introduction to the Asian & Pacific Council*, Department of External Affairs, Canberra, 1968, p. 9.

administer. A surprising number of the problems confronting us in subsequent chapters, we shall find, can be traced back to the wide dispersion of Australian aid and the *ad hoc* character of project selection.

Recruitment

Having examined the way in which projects involving Australian experts come to be chosen, we must now turn our attention to the recruiting of the experts themselves. As mentioned in the previous chapter, one of the factors the Australian authorities have had to bear in mind when vetting requests for aid is the likelihood of being able to attract suitable personnel. Choice of projects and recruitment are therefore not to be thought of as separate steps in a sequence but as essentially interrelated activities. In one sense, therefore, recruitment can be described as successful if it does not interfere unduly with the level and pattern of technical assistance provided. Some degree of international specialisation in expertise is inevitable—indeed desirable—especially for a small country like Australia; but it would be unfortunate if useful projects in fields in which Australia has a claim to competence and which are worth supporting on other grounds had repeatedly to be turned down simply because recruiting was ineffective.

Once the Australian authorities agree to try and help, successful recruiting means producing suitable nominations reasonably promptly. There are two basic requirements to be met in this regard. First, as many Australians as possible who have the necessary qualifications should be potentially recruitable in the sense of being aware of the jobs offering in their field, being sympathetic to the idea of applying for a post if given the opportunity, and being able to secure leave of absence in the event of being invited to accept. Secondly, the best choice should be made from among the potential recruits.

THE POSITION IN PRACTICE

Choice of Experts

How far have these two requirements been satisfied in practice? Let us begin with the second of them: picking suitable people for technical assistance posts. Colombo Plan selection is made by the External Aid Branch in Canberra and U.N. selection by the headquarters of the agency concerned (normally in conjunction with the U.N. office in Sydney), both donor organisations making extensive use of the Department of Labour

and National Service to seek out applicants. All appointments must be confirmed by the host country; and while this is usually a formality, occasionally a nomination may be rejected or sent back for reconsideration. Sometimes in the past, for example, an Asian government has been reluctant to accept a U.N. expert from a particular country, although we personally know of no cases involving Australians. But even though nominations have usually gone through without query, actual confirmation by the host country can be a lengthy business at times, creating problems for both the recruiting authorities and those nominated.

It is of course almost impossible to judge how far technical assistance posts have actually gone to the best people available, since we have little or no information about the candidates passed over. However, from what we know of the professional and personal qualifications of those accepted and of the way their missions were conducted, it is clear that the selection process worked reasonably well in the 1950s and early 1960s. The best person may not invariably have been chosen, but those selected generally turned out to be sound appointments and when their missions failed rarely could it be attributed directly to bad recruitment.

Nevertheless our inquiries brought to light one regrettable feature of the selection process: appointments were sometimes based on inaccurate job descriptions. The expert chosen on such occasions did not necessarily prove unsuitable; for while the job may not have been what he expected, he may still have managed to cope satisfactorily—or at any rate as satisfactorily as others in similar circumstances would have. But in a number of instances faulty job descriptions certainly led to the selection of individuals who were not in fact properly qualified to do the work. A school broadcasting expert, for example, went abroad some years ago believing she would be producing radio programs—the kind of work for which she was qualified. Actually the greater part of her time was taken up with re-writing scripts and with other editorial duties more or less new to her. In another case a teacher went to Malaya to fill a post in ‘secondary technical education’, under the impression that he would be advising on matters of advanced technical training as the term is understood in Australia. It was only on reaching Kuala Lumpur that he discovered to his consternation that in Malaya ‘secondary technical education’ refers to practical training in woodwork and the like, about which he knew next to nothing. In the job description of a third expert—this time in the Philippines—mention was made of maintenance engineering, but when he got there he found that what was really required was somebody to train maintenance technicians. Without any previous experience as an instructor, he had to turn his hand to organising and running a training program.

Although these experts were not properly qualified for the actual jobs they did, they were nevertheless able to handle the work competently enough. But had they been better qualified they would no doubt have found the tasks easier and less frustrating. Indeed, one or two whose job descriptions had been misleading confessed to us that they would not have accepted the assignments had they realised beforehand what was going to be involved.

Faulty job description also has occasionally led to the appointment of someone who, although capable of doing the work, was unnecessarily high-powered for the job: the assignment could have been carried out just as effectively by somebody more junior. Apart from anything else, recruiting at too senior a level represents a wasteful use of scarce resources and can prove a source of embarrassment to both the host country and the expert. A leading crop scientist with CSIRO, for example, was sent by the United Nations to Malaya in the early 1960s to undertake what turned out to be rather commonplace experimental research which could have been done equally well by a much less experienced person. Then there was the case of the Melbourne man who accepted a UNESCO appointment imagining that he would be responsible for establishing a publishing organisation. The work he finally did was in fact much more pedestrian and could have been carried out by a rather junior publication officer. He claimed that other UNESCO experts had found themselves in a similar position, performing tasks far below their qualifications and capabilities.

It is thus apparent that job descriptions have been a weak link in the selection process by not being specific enough or by being positively misleading. U.N. authorities have probably been more insistent than their Colombo Plan colleagues that job descriptions be set out as fully and as accurately as possible, and that they be formally amended if changes have to be made. Some Asian countries seem to have made greater effort than others to prepare informative and reliable job descriptions. We have not looked into this matter closely, but India is often cited as a country which puts a great deal of care into preparing job descriptions.

Supply of Recruits

Apart from mistakes stemming from faulty job descriptions, the selection of experts generally appears to have been satisfactory in the sense that those picked have performed reasonably well. But it does not necessarily follow from this that the supply of potential recruits to choose from has been adequate, for recruiting difficulties can show up in other ways than the lowering of selection standards—and this in fact has been Australia's problem to some extent. Let us elaborate:

- (i) The initial choice of projects may be affected by recruiting

considerations, as already mentioned in Chapter 2. From time to time the Australian authorities have been obliged to turn down requests for aid simply because suitable recruits were not expected to be forthcoming.

(ii) Starting dates may be delayed owing to the time taken to find experts. In 1963, for example, two scientists were sent on a brief visit to Thailand to investigate an application for foreign aid for an irrigation scheme. They prepared a report in which, among other things, they recommended that a team of Australians should go to Thailand to establish and run a research station. On the basis of this report the Thai government formally submitted a request to Australia for a number of scientists. This was agreed to in Canberra, but recruiting proved unexpectedly difficult, and by mid-1966—more than two years later—the task had still not been completed. This long delay placed the Australian government in a somewhat embarrassing position, for contrary to the usual practice of tentatively agreeing subject to suitable candidates being available, it had in this case given a fairly firm assurance that Australia would meet the request. The delay was also upsetting for the Thai authorities, since the task assigned to the Australians was part of a larger project with a carefully worked out time-schedule.

(iii) Delays may occur in replacing personnel. Several experts have complained that their successors failed to arrive until some time after their own departure. As a result, continuity was broken and their replacements, when eventually they arrived, were liable to be confronted with a range of problems which would not have arisen, or could at least have been coped with more readily, had they assumed duties earlier. Indeed, according to a U.N. evaluation team which visited Thailand just before we did in 1965, the consequences of delay in replacing personnel may well be more serious than the consequences of delay in making initial appointments. They point out that:

Delays in the implementation of projects are due mainly to the difficulties in the recruitment of experts. In the case of the initial expert, this delay does not greatly affect the final result of the project, but long delays in the replacement of an expert by another in the course of implementation adversely affects the result of the project.¹

It would be wrong, though, to assume that recruiting difficulties have been the sole reason for delays in replacing experts; the host country may simply have left its request for a successor until the last minute, giving the Australian authorities little time to find a replacement.

(iv) Recruiting difficulties may mean that posts are never filled. This has not often happened in the sense that promises have had to be broken:

¹ Report of the Thailand Evaluation Team, p. 48.

as already mentioned, the Australian government normally avoids entering into firm commitments until the experts have actually been found. But a few cases have come to our notice. One relates to a team which went to Malaya in 1961 to assist in T.B. control. An X-ray technician-radiographer, two nurses and a records clerk were sent, but no suitable bacteriologist could be found to accompany them as Malaya had requested. Another concerns the post of economic consultant in Ceylon. This was filled for a year by an Australian and it was intended that another Australian would succeed him. This idea eventually had to be abandoned, however, as no one could be found.

(v) Finally, recruiting difficulties may have a restraining influence on the total volume of Australian technical assistance—or at least on its rate of increase. How much of a restraining influence it is impossible to say, but perhaps quite an appreciable one if the experience of other countries is any guide. Thus an OECD report comments: 'In most Member countries the factor limiting the expansion of technical assistance is not a shortage of funds, but the difficulty of recruiting suitable qualified personnel and establishing appropriate training facilities.'² In fact one particular OECD country—Sweden—has openly stated that, while it prefers technical to financial assistance as a form of aid-giving, the shortage of experts is expected to set limits to the continuous expansion of technical aid and lead to greater emphasis on financial assistance.³

It is clear then that Australia, like other donor countries, has had to contend with genuine recruiting difficulties on the supply side—difficulties, moreover, which one would expect to increase rather than diminish in the absence of more active recruiting measures. Before we consider policy changes, however, it is worth describing what our questionnaires and personal interviews revealed about two important matters bearing on recruitment: the motives of individuals in accepting appointments, and the ways in which they were approached to become experts.

FACTORS BEARING ON RECRUITMENT

Motives

One of the issues raised in the questionnaire dealt with motives. Four possible reasons for accepting assignments were listed—financial; to gain professional experience or advancement; opportunity to travel; and pressure from colleagues or supervisors. Experts were asked to indicate which, if any, of these had influenced them in deciding to accept. They

² *Development Assistance Efforts and Policies. 1963 Review*, OECD, Paris, 1963, pp. 40-1.

³ G. Ohlin, *Foreign Aid Policies Reconsidered*, OECD, Paris, 1966, p. 46.

were also asked to mention other reasons they might have had. According to the findings summarised in Table 2, the financial side has not been particularly important—at least experts were not prepared to admit that it might have been⁴—nor has pressure from colleagues. The other two motives were given much more emphasis, being of roughly equal significance if the first two columns of the table are combined. Many of the additional reasons put forward involved idealism in some form—being of service to developing countries—and have been grouped in the table under that heading. Idealism ranks roughly on par with professional experience and travel, and would probably have featured more prominently had it been specifically listed in the questionnaire.

The remaining reasons for undertaking assignments, shown in the table under 'other', are a varied assortment. They include for example: the family's keenness on the idea (mentioned several times); something to do while on long-service leave; Christian missionary service; because his Australian project at the time was 'getting him precisely nowhere' and a temporary break was therefore sought; to enable the completion of a job he had begun under the Volunteer Graduate Scheme which would otherwise not have been finished; because of a sense of obligation arising from

TABLE 2
Reasons for Accepting Assignment
(Percentages)

Reasons for accepting assignment	Only reason given	One of several reasons given	Not mentioned	Total*
Financial	1	13	86	100
To gain professional experience or advancement	7	37	56	100
Opportunity to travel	3	37	60	100
Pressure from colleagues or supervisors	3	5	92	100
Idealism	13	25	62	100
Other	19	19	62	100

* Total sample: 242 experts.

⁴ This proviso must be stressed, for in Canberra's experience experts tend to be very concerned about remuneration and are frequently not prepared to sign on until all financial queries have been resolved to their satisfaction.

the fact that the Minister for External Affairs—a personal friend—had asked him to accept the assignment.

As our study was directed to those individuals who had actually done technical assistance work, we have not had the opportunity of discovering at first hand why other individuals who may have thought about becoming experts, or were approached to do so, decided against it. Nevertheless, from our contact with those who had seen service in Asia we managed to learn something of the kinds of problems facing potential recruits, and this in turn told us something about people's reasons for refusing to become experts. Prospective experts, we found, were largely worried about three things: salary and promotion; leave of absence; and family.

Salary and Promotion . Although relatively few experts in answering the questionnaire referred to the financial motive as a reason for their accepting, the majority of those actually interviewed described the salary and allowances they received as highly satisfactory, often enabling them to save substantially more than they could possibly have done if they had remained in Australia. For example, a U.N. expert stationed in the Philippines in the late 1950s admitted that, although living expenses had been high, his basic salary together with allowances had made it possible to put aside \$A2,000 a year; during his 3-year term he had thus been able to save what in Australia would have taken him ten years. The same sort of comment was made by sufficient numbers of individuals to suggest that by and large salary considerations have not been an obstacle to recruitment—indeed, if anything salary has probably helped to sustain the supply of applicants for jobs. This conclusion, however, needs to be qualified in several ways:

(i) Some Colombo Plan experts complained that they were not paid as well as U.N. personnel performing equivalent tasks. This may have been so, but salary differences should not be exaggerated: although U.N. personnel appear in general to have been rather better off in terms of basic salary, Colombo Plan experts often did rather better out of various fringe benefits. At any rate, we have not come across any strong evidence to suggest that the Colombo Plan has been losing potential experts to the United Nations because of the financial factor.

(ii) Although most of those with whom we discussed the matter felt that they had been well treated financially, a small group admitted that taking on an assignment had meant monetary sacrifice. Almost without exception those in this category were highly qualified and senior people in private practice, such as medical specialists and industrial consultants. Their period as experts was usually fairly brief: indeed, because of large earnings and demands on their services in Australia, few of them would have been prepared to accept appointments of any length. At the top level,

therefore, salary may well have been a genuine obstacle to recruitment, especially for longer assignments.

(iii) Some experts pointed out that, although the salary they received was satisfactory from a short-term point of view, it had been far less attractive in longer terms because their promotion prospects had suffered. Misgivings of this kind were confined almost entirely to persons who had been away from their normal employment for some time, several of them frankly admitting that it had been the length of their absence which had held back their promotion: if they had gone for a shorter period, so they claimed, the problem might not have arisen. Those who complained along these lines did not usually make it clear exactly why the mission should have damaged their position. One Commonwealth employee, however, was quite explicit: technical assistance involved his being transferred to the 'unattached list', which meant he could not apply or be considered for public service vacancies nor was there any certainty of getting his former job back on return. We also learned—from recruiting authorities rather than experts themselves—that university staff and scientists in research institutes like CSIRO were especially prone to worry about possible detrimental effects on promotion. Their promotion, they apparently believed, depended mainly on their output of articles and papers, and this was almost certain to be cut back if they went on a mission. These and similar fears about jeopardising promotion must not, however, be taken to imply that most experts and potential experts have necessarily felt this way. One or two indeed informed us that they were actually promoted while on the mission, and a number of others have admitted that their term as an expert had helped them to achieve promotion later. In addition, as we have already seen in Table 2, many of those who replied to the questionnaire indicated that a reason for their accepting an assignment was to gain professional experience or advancement. All the same, we have been confronted by sufficient apprehension about the risks to promotion to suppose that, regardless of whether or not this apprehension has been warranted, it has acted as something of an obstacle to recruitment at least as far as long-term assignments are concerned.

Leave of Absence Securing leave of absence has not always been easy. Employees in the private sector have sometimes had to resign their jobs in order to accept assignments, and to look for new work on their return. Government officers have not been required to take such drastic action, except that in one or two instances we know that an expert, on reaching the end of his leave of absence, has chosen to resign from the public service in order to stay longer or undertake a new assignment. Once a government officer has been approached to serve overseas he has normally had no difficulty in obtaining departmental approval, since the

customary practice of recruiting authorities is to ask a departmental head to suggest somebody, so that if a person is nominated it means that his release is reasonably assured. The chief stumbling-block in fact has been to get departments to agree to nominate individuals in the first place. We have heard this criticism levelled against most Commonwealth departments as well as against CSIRO; another criticism of CSIRO is that it tended to release only its more dispensable—and by implication less useful—members of staff. At the State government level, recruiting authorities have had a good deal of trouble with agriculture departments which are invariably short-staffed and therefore often reluctant to release personnel for the agricultural advisory posts that feature prominently under the Colombo Plan and United Nations. For instance, the considerable delay already referred to in recruiting a team for the Thai irrigation project was largely due to the refusal of a particular State department of agriculture to make personnel available. There were drought conditions in Australia at the time and all officers in the department were fully occupied. We have also heard complaints from a few State technical college teachers that they experienced considerable difficulty in securing leave, and in several cases were granted it only when they themselves had found the temporary teachers to replace them during their absence. If appreciable numbers of those who have been on assignments have had some difficulty securing nominations or getting leave of absence, it is reasonably certain that others we do not know about have been effectively prevented from applying for or accepting posts for the same reason. Moreover, the problem is likely to have been more serious in the case of longer missions: appointments lasting only a month or two have not usually caused as much trouble.

Family We mentioned earlier that among the many and varied motives of experts for accepting assignments has been family pressure: the wife has wanted to go abroad or the parents have felt that a period of residence in a foreign country was a desirable educational experience for teen-age children. Against this, however, we have encountered still more instances where family considerations have been a hindrance rather than an incentive to recruitment. Under both the Colombo Plan and the United Nations, an expert wishing to take members of his family with him has been obliged to meet the additional expense out of his own pocket if his appointment was for less than a year. In consequence, only about one-third of the experts serving on missions of under twelve months have been accompanied by members of their family. It is difficult to say how far this has deterred some potential experts from participating but it probably has had its influence: several who took their wives at their own expense admitted to us that they would have turned down the offer had

their wives not been permitted to go. In the case of longer assignments, financial provision has normally been made for the expert's wife and children to accompany him if so desired. But once a mission extends, schooling for children—especially at the secondary level—is often a worry, causing some experts at the time of appointment to have serious doubts about the wisdom of accepting. This problem has not been as great as it might since additional expense allowances are provided to meet children's education in Australia or overseas. Even so, family separations for long stretches must be something of a deterrent. On balance, then, family considerations have probably held people back from undertaking assignments. But for the most part experts do not seem to have been greatly influenced one way or the other by the family issue—and it is highly doubtful whether those on very short missions of, say, under three months have been influenced at all.

Means of Contact

Answers to the questionnaire indicate that only about 15 per cent of experts, virtually all U.N. appointments, were recruited in response to an advertisement. It was much more usual for the donor authorities, through the Department of Labour and National Service or in other ways, to contact a particular government, business or professional organisation asking whether a suitable person could be suggested. Where the project had to do with providing Australian capital, one or more members of staff of the firm producing the equipment may have been nominated by an employer to supervise its installation and to train local workers to handle it. In projects of this kind—there have been quite a number of them—the nominee has sometimes had little option but to accept, the mission being viewed merely as an extension of his normal duties. Even where a project is not directly concerned with installing equipment, a business organisation, government department or professional association may nevertheless have a special interest in proceedings—for example, the Australian Broadcasting Commission in school radio programs in countries like Thailand and the Philippines, the Department of Civil Aviation in the running of Singapore's international airport and the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons in conducting medical lectures and examinations in Singapore. In such cases a certain amount of moral pressure may have been brought to bear to persuade an employee or association member to accept nomination. But in other instances those asked to propose someone have had little stake themselves in the technical assistance work being undertaken. They have acted merely as intermediaries, putting the recruiting authorities in touch with prospective candidates and leaving it entirely to the latter to decide whether to accept. Thus State

departments of education have frequently been approached for suggestions, and they in turn have contacted teachers who fit the bill to see if they would be interested. Similarly, most professional associations have tended to act in this fashion; among those we came across in pursuing our investigations were the New South Wales Anti-T.B. Association, the Royal Australasian College of Physicians, the Bread Manufacturers of Victoria Association and the Timber Brokers' Association of London.

From experts' comments it would appear that recruitment on a number of occasions has been aimed at securing the services of particular individuals. This has come about in several ways:

(i) Sometimes a specific individual was asked for by the host country when putting in a request for aid. There are several reasons why a person may have been singled out in this manner. (a) He may previously have worked in that country on another Colombo Plan or U.N. assignment, as a volunteer graduate, or in some private capacity. A number of cases have been in this category. (b) It may have been known that he would be passing through the country and so the opportunity was taken to ask if his services would be available. In this way, Singapore secured an industrial designer and Malaya a radio talks man—the former for two years and the latter for four months. (c) An Asian visitor may previously have met him in Australia and suggested his name to the appropriate authorities at home. For instance, a particular Australian was approached to join a dairying project in India because the Indian Dairy Development Commissioner, while touring this country, had met this person in a laboratory and subsequently made inquiries about his availability. Again, an official of the Indonesian Ministry of Education who spent some weeks at the Victorian Visual Aids Centre on a UNESCO fellowship was later able to suggest to his own government that a particular member of staff at the Centre would be a suitable person to fill a technical assistance post. In neither of these cases was the overseas visitor directly concerned at the time with looking for recruits. But the head of Singapore's broadcasting system came to Australia with this largely in mind. Arrangements were made for him to meet a number of possible candidates in the eastern States. He chose one to help with the planning of Singapore's television service and had him on the job in a matter of weeks. (d) A person may have been asked for because of his acknowledged expertise. The Indians have perhaps done this more than most. Their scientific institutes, for example, have from time to time requested the services of a particular Australian because from his publications or from personal contact with colleagues he was known to possess the qualifications sought.

(ii) Names suggested by other experts have sometimes put the recruiting authorities on to particular individuals. On appointment, a team

leader for instance, may have been asked to nominate those he would like to have in the team. This was what happened when a school broadcasting officer was chosen to head a three-man team to the Philippines; as fellow members he proposed two others on the staff of the Australian Broadcasting Commission in Melbourne. Alternatively the nomination may have come from somebody already serving in Asia suggesting a successor or addition to a team. A Colombo Plan printing project in Indonesia is a case in point. About a dozen Australians participated in this venture during the ten years of its operation, and practically all were approached to join in response to suggestions made by existing members of the team. For the most part in fact they were employees of the same firm in Western Australia.

(iii) Occasionally an expert has been approached because the Colombo Plan or U.N. authorities have already been aware of his existence and possible usefulness.⁵ He may have served on a previous mission and still be on their call list; for instance, a dairying expert who had done work for FAO in Nicaragua (1953) and Guatemala (1955) was contacted in 1960 by the same agency to see if he would go to Indonesia. Alternatively he may be known to the authorities through having applied unsuccessfully for a previous post, or through having written asking to be considered for a position should one turn up. A further possibility is that the authorities may have learned about him from another sponsoring organisation. Thus a printing expert invited to Malaya by ILO has suggested to us that this agency must somehow have got to hear about his earlier Colombo Plan mission to Indonesia. Again, a nursing sister who applied for a WHO position in India was approached by the Australian government to see if she would be prepared to switch to a Colombo Plan assignment in Ceylon because the WHO assignment was delayed and a leader was needed rather urgently for the Ceylonese project. Finally some form of more personal contact may be involved. An expert who had been on a mission to India told us that he heard about the job only as a result of having had a friend at ILO headquarters in Geneva who realised he might be interested and made sure he was approached. Two other experts—distinguished figures in their professions—intimated that the Minister for External Affairs knew them personally and that this was how they had come to be invited to undertake Colombo Plan assignments.

⁵ The Department of Labour and National Service keeps a register of names and addresses, accompanied by other details, to help it in its recruiting activities on behalf of the Colombo Plan and United Nations. The U.N. Development Programme office in Sydney also maintains a register as do the headquarters overseas of some of the U.N. agencies (e.g. FAO).

PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Having examined the recruiting problem and certain related issues, it is now time to consider possible ways in which the supply of potential recruits might be extended.

Conditions of Service

If what we said about salary and family is correct, conditions of service have not been a major obstacle to recruitment and therefore hardly warrant wholesale revision as far as attracting experts is concerned. The aspect of service that seems to have had the most discouraging effects on recruitment is promotion—the fear that prospects of advancement may suffer if one takes leave of absence to serve as an expert. The same point has recently been raised in a U.N. report in commenting on the difficulties of attracting high-level experts. The report expressed the view that U.N. terms of recruitment did not in many cases offer sufficient incentive to compensate an individual for loss of position, seniority and promotion opportunities in his normal employment. The suggestion was therefore put forward that the United Nations should negotiate a basic technical assistance agreement with member governments, universities, and scientific and research institutions, which would allow employees to serve as U.N. experts without losing their present or future rights in their normal jobs.⁶ This is an interesting proposal and one that the Australian government might profitably examine to see whether it would not be worth incorporating into the Colombo Plan.⁷

Additional Expertise

A criticism sometimes levelled against Australian technical assistance—and against that of other countries too—is that it draws on only part of the work force, by-passing important sections of the community willing and able to give useful service in developing countries. In particular, Colombo Plan posts generally demand a degree of training and experience which effectively rules out recent university and technical college graduates and similar people. Only 8 per cent of those who responded to our questionnaire were under thirty at the time they began their assignment. This is disappointing not only because there is much useful work that

⁶ *An Evaluation of the Impact and Effectiveness of the Technical Co-operation Programme of the United Nations Family of Organizations in Chile* (Report of the Chile Evaluation Team), United Nations, New York, 1966, pp. 59-60.

⁷ A proposal currently under discussion in Canberra is that the Department of External Affairs should 'contract for service', which would make the expert a servant of the Department and, probably more important, would enable basic salary and allowances to be negotiated independently of Public Service Board scales.

young folk might have done—to the benefit of themselves as well as the recipient country—but also because many of the young have genuinely altruistic reasons for wanting to be of service. According to the questionnaire, younger experts were more inclined than older ones to stress idealism as a motive. Idealism in itself is not of course an adequate basis for selecting experts, and misplaced idealism can be positively harmful. But youthful enthusiasm, if handled properly and accompanied by other qualities, can be a most valuable asset in the field of technical assistance.

How might the services of the young be more fully and effectively utilised? A number of countries and multilateral bodies have tackled the problem by recruiting recent graduates as associate experts, putting them under the direction of more senior advisers. The suggestion has been made to us that Australia should be doing something similar herself. An expert stationed in Sabah, for example, referred to the grave local shortage of veterinarians to deal with artificial insemination of cattle. He proposed that the Australian government send a batch of young graduates to that country for a fairly lengthy spell to fill the gap.⁸ In another case, an Australian was sent to investigate the feasibility of aiding a newly-established university in a backward part of a particular Asian country. He submitted a somewhat pessimistic report, suggesting that local conditions were too primitive to expect Australian academics to go and work there. This may have been true as regards more senior members of staff. But it has been put to us that many young Australians would find working in such an environment for several years a challenging and rewarding experience. The British at any rate have taken this view: they have sent a number of their own recent graduates to this university under a special arrangement.

Two advantages of enlisting the services of more young people have so far been mentioned: it would mobilise manpower for staffing technical assistance posts from a source which until now has scarcely been tapped at all; and it would enable certain kinds of technical assistance to be given which might not otherwise be possible. There is also a third advantage, not unrelated to the other two. The services of at least some more senior experts might be better utilised if, instead of remaining continuously on the job for a long stretch—which they often cannot afford to do anyway because their time is so precious—or instead of making a single rush trip too short to achieve much, they were to undertake several brief visits, a more junior individual staying with the project the whole time to carry out their recommendations and keep them in touch with the progress

⁸ A major obstacle as far as this particular scheme is concerned is the serious shortage of veterinarians in Australia.

being made. Younger people of limited experience could suitably act in this way as junior partners. This in turn would enable the services of top-level advisers—always likely to be in short supply—to be used more effectively and economically.

Recruiting younger people to work in developing countries either as associate experts or under some sort of 'Peace Corps' arrangement inevitably merges with the question of voluntary bodies which have been mainly responsible up to now for doing this kind of thing, admittedly on a fairly modest scale. A number of countries have introduced special measures to foster private aid to developing countries, including financial support for voluntary organisations and the creation of joint government-private ventures. In the long run, indeed, this may offer the best means of channelling young graduates into foreign aid work, as well as tradesmen, low-grade technicians and others who in the past have not figured prominently in officially-sponsored aid. In the last few years the Australian government has begun to show keener interest in the work of voluntary bodies, and is now providing financial support for the Australian Volunteers Abroad scheme conducted through the Overseas Service Bureau in Melbourne. But many of the volunteers under this scheme are sent to areas outside the orbit of the Colombo Plan, such as Papua-New Guinea, the Pacific Islands and Africa. Much still needs to be done, therefore, to attract younger people into service in the Asian region, and serious consideration should be given both to widening the scope of operations of the Colombo Plan to include associate or junior experts of some sort and to lending greater financial support to voluntary groups to make it possible for them to send more workers to Asia.

This is perhaps the most appropriate place to raise the question of establishing a career service for at least some Colombo Plan personnel in the same way that U.N. agencies have permanent staff in the field. It might entice some people to become experts who so far have been unwilling, thereby extending the range of recruitment. It might also then be possible to have a small group of experts continuously on tap who would be available to go overseas at short notice to meet an urgent request or to act as stand-ins when a delay in recruitment occurs.⁹ A number of countries have considered at some stage the possibility of introducing a career service but have usually dismissed the idea fairly promptly because long-run career prospects appear so uncertain in the field of foreign aid. If countries with much larger aid programs have reached this conclusion, it is unlikely that Australia at present could make

⁹ This idea is aired in *An Evaluation of the Impact of the Technical Co-operation Programme of the United Nations Family of Organizations in Tunisia* (Report of the Tunis Evaluation Team), United Nations, New York, 1966, p. 60.

a success of such a scheme. It is nevertheless something that should be kept in mind for future consideration.

Recruiting in the Private Sector

As Table 3 indicates, the proportion of Australian experts recruited from the private sector has been quite small—especially so if the self-employed are excluded from the picture. This is partly because technical assistance has largely been concentrated in such fields as education and vocational training, public utilities and agricultural research and services which in Australia mainly fall within the province of the public sector, defining this in its widest sense to include hospitals, universities and bodies like the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Authority. To some extent, therefore, more recruiting from the private sector depends on increasing the range of technical assistance activities—in the industrial field, for instance, including a wide area of research. But even as things stand at present, greater use could probably be made of personnel recruited from business. We have received a number of complaints, for example, that capital equipment has been sent to Asian countries under the Colombo Plan without adequate expert assistance to supervise its installation and train locals to maintain and run it.

TABLE 3
Nature of Employment in Australia

Nature of employment	%
Commonwealth department	19
State department	23
Semi-government authority	14
University	13
Hospital	6
Employee in private sector	11
Partner; self-employed	14
Total*	100

* Total sample: 236 experts.

If recruiting in the private sector is to be extended, more needs to be done to enlist business co-operation in both the passive and active senses. On the passive side, firms must be encouraged to release staff wishing to participate in technical assistance work and to minimise the difficulties in their way. Employees should not be placed in the invidious position of having to resign their jobs in order to become experts, as has sometimes occurred in the past with long-term appointments; nor should their

promotion rights suffer. Firms should also be brought into the recruiting picture in a more active capacity, helping to foster interest among employees in technical assistance and keeping the latter informed of the openings available. It is unlikely that these things will be achieved simply by circulating job vacancy notices more widely among firms and professional associations than at present and leaving it at that. Ways and means must be found of encouraging the business community to participate in more positive fashion in the work of technical assistance, as is beginning to happen in other countries. In France, for instance, private industry has been brought more closely into the technical assistance framework as a result of the setting up of ASMIG, a group of leading figures in business who try to encourage firms to make managerial personnel available for overseas assignments. Similarly, an Executive Service Corps was formed in the United States five or six years ago to 'provide American businessmen with an opportunity to furnish, on request, technical and managerial advice to businessmen in developing countries'.¹⁰ The Committee for Economic Development of Australia (CEDA), a non profit-making body sponsored by private business, has lately been investigating certain aspects of Australian foreign aid from the standpoint of the business community. This would perhaps be the most appropriate organisation to undertake a close examination of the whole question of private sector recruitment and to advise the Australian government on possible ways of drawing private enterprise more completely and effectively into the foreign aid program.

Recruiting in the Public Sector

While some organisations like the Australian Broadcasting Commission and the Snowy Mountains Authority have readily released numbers of their staff over the years to serve as experts, there can be little doubt that the supply of recruits from the government sector as a whole has been well below its true potential. Two reasons may be mentioned. First, as explained earlier, recruitment has mainly been a matter of nomination and thus dependent on a system of contacts. In consequence, many suitable individuals are likely to have been overlooked: the recruiting authorities have been unaware of their existence, while they in turn have been unaware of the openings available. The range of potential recruits in a wide variety of jobs including teaching and nursing might profitably be extended by giving greater publicity to job vacancies, enlisting the active co-operation of organisation heads to ensure that full information on

¹⁰ President Johnson, Message to Congress on 'The U.S. Foreign Aid Program', 19 March 1964, quoted in H. W. Arndt, *Australian Foreign Aid Policy*. The Thirty-first Joseph Fisher Lecture in Commerce, Adelaide, 1964, p. 17.

vacancies is circulated to all who might be interested. But recruitment at the senior level will always have to rely primarily on the direct approach, and here too there is room for improvement. In particular it is questionable whether the Department of Labour and National Service is the best body to handle the senior recruitment it does, and we should therefore like to see the recruiting authorities turning more towards one or two key figures in each field of expertise for advice on nominations. Perhaps panels of advisers could be set up on similar lines to those suggested for initial vetting (see p. 30).

Secondly, something should be done to remove the obstacles which public servants tend to come up against when applying for Colombo Plan or U.N. posts. Commonwealth employees can normally obtain leave of absence without pay for up to a maximum of three years, which must be considered reasonably satisfactory. But State governments and their instrumentalities are rarely as generous as this, one year in many cases being the most an applicant can hope for—if he is granted leave at all. The problem of course is largely one of staff shortage; as it is, releasing manpower even on a very limited scale may impose considerable strain on the remaining staff. Some countries faced with this situation have been experimenting with the creation of supernumerary posts in the public service so that a proportion of staff will always be available for secondment overseas.¹¹ Serious consideration should be given to doing something similar in Australia, at least in those areas of the public service such as State departments of education and agriculture where staff shortages are acute and demands for experts most pressing. An arrangement of this kind should not involve State governments in much additional spending, as the salaries of staff serving abroad would be a charge on the donor authorities. But in so far as they were to be out of pocket in consequence, it would be appropriate for the Commonwealth government to compensate them, foreign aid being essentially a national matter.

One way of enlisting greater support from certain types of organisations in the public sector would be to try to associate them in some direct fashion with specific projects abroad. This is already done quite extensively in the United States under the sisterhood scheme where a particular American university 'adopts' a university in a developing country, supplying it with equipment, sending members of its own staff there to teach, and in turn bringing staff and students from the sister institution to the United States for teaching experience and study. Continuity of aid-giving is thereby achieved, and the interest of the entire home campus in technical assistance is stimulated through the university

¹¹ See *Development Assistance Efforts and Policies. 1963 Review*, p. 41.

being identified with the project. Sisterhood schemes may also involve considerable economy in resources since existing institutions can be utilised for the purpose. Furthermore, counterparts tend to be supplied as a matter of course, and follow up occurs more or less automatically. The suggestion was made to us by a senior official in the Indian Ministry of Education that an Australian university might consider sponsoring an Indian university along these lines. However, a full-scale scheme would undoubtedly over-strain the limited financial resources of any single Australian university, and one would probably have to think in terms of a number of universities acting together as co-sponsors. We understand in this connection that a plan to assist Asian universities—those in Indonesia and Malaysia more specifically—has been the subject of recent discussion between the Commonwealth government and Australian vice-chancellors.

A variation of the sisterhood idea would be to get a group of Australian—or perhaps British Commonwealth—universities together and ask them to assume a continuing joint responsibility to supply experts in a selected field, say economic planning. In the past projects have sometimes been jeopardised by lack of assured continuity in expertise so that, as well as being a means of recruiting experts, an arrangement of this sort might help to improve the quality of technical assistance itself.

Because they are the source of a great deal of valuable expertise, and because in Australia they have tended to lag somewhat in supplying technical aid to the developing countries, it is especially desirable that the universities should associate themselves with sisterhood schemes and the like. But there is no reason why other public institutions should not enter into similar arrangements. Thus an irrigation engineer who served in Vietnam has proposed that, to ensure greater continuity of expertise in his own field of activity, each of the State irrigation authorities in Australia should take an Asian country under its wing and keep it regularly supplied with the experts and other technical assistance it requires. Although organisations such as the Australian Broadcasting Commission and the State Electricity Commission of Victoria have made a start in this direction by forming ties with sister bodies abroad, there is still much that can usefully be done.¹²

Public Awareness

As already pointed out, closer contacts need to be established between aid administrators on the one hand and employers, employees and

¹² The Registry of Experts' Services set up recently under the auspices of ASPAC and referred to already in Chapter 2 could provide the basis for very useful links between Australian and Asian scientists and technologists, with implications for recruitment.

professional associations on the other hand, if obstacles to recruitment are to be overcome successfully. But in a sense the task is really the more basic one of educating the public at large on the role of technical assistance and on its own responsibilities in this regard. In the past the vast majority of Australians have known and cared little about foreign aid. In consequence there can hardly be said to have been any real pressure of public opinion compelling people to look seriously into the possibility of becoming experts. Although the problem is not one that can be solved quickly and easily, this is no excuse for ignoring it. What is particularly needed is a more forthright and enterprising campaign on the government's part to publicise Australian foreign aid in all its aspects. Arranging visits by Asian officials to Australia to speak about their countries' needs might, for example, be one useful if modest way of creating greater general interest and understanding. In the long run a knowledgeable and sympathetic public could well turn out to be the most effective means of building up an adequate supply of potential recruits.

Assignment Preparations

Choice of project and recruitment of expert are not in themselves enough to initiate successful technical assistance. This chapter deals with the remaining preliminaries which may usefully be considered under three headings: briefing; other preparations in Australia; and preparations in the host country.

BRIEFING

The Evidence

If experts are to perform their duties efficiently, they need to be properly briefed in the sense of being given a clear picture in advance of the nature of the work they will be doing, the professional and personal problems likely to be encountered, the terms of their appointment and so on. The answers to our questionnaire bear this out. Although experts were not asked specifically to say whether their briefing had been good, fair or poor, one of the matters on which they were invited to comment at the end of the questionnaire was the adequacy of briefing. From the replies submitted, together with the opinions of those personally interviewed, we were able to make a tentative assessment of the quality of briefing in 149 cases and to compare this with the degree of assignment success. The findings are presented in Table 4 and suggest a connection between these two things: good briefing is more likely to have been followed by a successful mission than is a fair or poor briefing. Table 4 also indicates that the overall standard of briefing in the period surveyed left a lot to be desired, being described as poor by one in three and only fair by one in four. Before examining some of the reasons for dissatisfaction and possible remedies, let us look at what, in practice, briefing tends to have involved.

Several Colombo Plan experts told us that their only briefing had been a letter from the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs advising them in general terms of the nature of their duties. But these were all very short-term appointments. The normal practice under the Colombo Plan was for the expert to attend a one or two-day briefing session in Canberra with departmental officers. At this session the expert

was apprised of the facts known about his assignment; this sometimes included letting him read the reports of former experts. The terms and conditions of appointment were explained and he was presented with a short document entitled 'Terms and Conditions of Service' covering such matters as salary, living and travel allowances, medical expenses, leave provisions and general conduct. He was also advised about living conditions in the host country—the costs of running a home, educational facilities for children, health precautions and the like—sometimes receiving a copy of the latest post report, a document prepared primarily for the benefit of diplomatic personnel. Finally, it was customary to be given a general outline of the political and social features of the host country.

TABLE 4
Quality of Briefing and Assignment Success

Quality of briefing	Size of sample	Degree of assignment success*			
		Most successful	Moderately successful	Failure	Total
	No.	%	%	%	%
Good	61	47	51	2	100
Fair	38	34	61	5	100
Poor	50	34	60	6	100
Total	149	40	56	4	100

* Up to time of expert's return to Australia.

In addition to being formally briefed by External Affairs, quite a number of Colombo Plan experts sought advice from other quarters on their own initiative or at Canberra's suggestion, and these informal contacts were often admitted to have been more useful than the official briefing. This supplementary advice, mainly relating to the assignment itself, came from several sources:

(i) Somebody formerly holding down a similar post may have been consulted. Thus a school broadcaster in Thailand learned a good deal about her assignment, living conditions and local culture from another Australian who had completed a similar mission in the same country six months earlier.

(ii) The expert's employer may have offered advice because of some special association with the project. For example, the leader of a school broadcasting team to the Philippines was fully briefed by his superiors in the Australian Broadcasting Commission. This briefing was excellent, and provided him with a complete and accurate picture of the work he would

be doing. In similar fashion the firm supplying the equipment for the Pakistani assignment of one of its staff gave the employee in question a detailed account of the technical problems he might expect to encounter.

(iii) Somebody else in Australia with special knowledge or experience may have been approached for advice. Before going to Singapore on a civil aviation mission, for instance, a Colombo Plan expert learned all about his duties from Singapore's civil aviation chief who happened to be in Australia at the time. Again, a pre-arranged meeting with WHO's chief consultant in Australia enabled an X-ray technician to obtain much worthwhile information on Malaysia's anti-T.B. program—the project he was joining.

(iv) The expert may have written to someone in the host country associated with the project to find out more about the job. The latter was perhaps an Australian expert already working there, or the head of the institute or department applying for his services. Contact of this kind often gave the expert a much better idea of what the assignment was going to involve.

(v) The expert may have consulted written material in Australian libraries or elsewhere to extend his background knowledge of the host country.

Briefing under the United Nations was along broadly similar lines, embracing assignment duties, living conditions, and so on. Special attention often seems to have been paid to explaining the structure of the U.N. organisation, the role of the specialised agencies, and the history of previous aid to the country concerned. The normal practice was for the expert, immediately prior to embarking on his mission, to attend a briefing session at the world headquarters or regional centre of the agency employing him. The length of the session varied considerably—from a couple of days to several weeks—and as in the case of certain Colombo Plan recruits, the only briefing on the assignment that one or two experts had was an explanatory letter from agency headquarters. The thoroughness of the briefing, particularly on the assignment itself, appears to have depended largely on whether the expert was (a) starting a new project or joining an existing one, (b) undertaking his first assignment or a subsequent one, and (c) going as team leader or as a junior member. Like their Colombo Plan colleagues, U.N. personnel had by no means relied exclusively on their official briefing to gain information but had sought advice elsewhere when they could—from former experts, contacts in the host country, and others.

Criticism

Many experts, as already mentioned, were not altogether happy with their

official briefing. There were several points of criticism:

(i) Some claimed they were not told enough about their assignments at the official briefing. In the opinion of a number, the fault lay with those conducting the briefing who, it was complained, knew little or nothing about the assignment beyond what was contained in the formal job description. Others attached the blame to the job description prepared by the host country when making its request for an expert: the terms of reference were too general and vague, and hence open to various interpretations. Criticism along these lines was occasionally tempered, however, with the observation that generality and vagueness were unavoidable as their mission had been something of a pioneering effort. Thus an Australian posted to an Asian country some years ago to initiate a project in the transport field made a point of stressing that External Affairs should not be taken to task for supplying him beforehand with extremely meagre details about his duties. In view of the chaotic state of the country's transport system and the novel aspects of his venture, the authorities in Australia could hardly have been expected to possess much worthwhile information. Some experts indeed went further and actually praised External Affairs for giving them a fairly free hand. It was desirable, they said, that the individual should have plenty of latitude to decide for himself what really needed doing when he reached the country. In other words, he should be encouraged to 'play by ear'—a phrase employed by several persons to describe the advice they were given at their briefing. One expert went into the matter a little more fully. He suggested that senior advisers on short-term exploratory missions should have their duties defined as broadly as possible. His own mission was of this sort, and had his terms of reference been set out any more specifically, he would have been hampered in his operations. An expert's terms of reference could always be narrowed down later in the light of his assessment of the situation on the spot, thus allowing him to play a more constructive role in deciding what was worth doing and what was not. The individual making these observations added, however, that in the case of long-term missions connected with the execution rather than the formulation of plans, duties probably needed to be defined rather more precisely.

(ii) Briefing on the assignment has fallen down at times not so much through vagueness as positive inaccuracy. Some individuals complained that the information they had received about the nature of their duties was misleading because on their arrival in the host country they discovered they would not be doing the kind of work they had previously imagined. The explanation for this, they mostly went on to say, lay in the faulty job descriptions received by the briefing authorities from the host country, although a number of experts blamed the briefing authorities themselves

for not having done more to check the accuracy of the information forwarded to them. Only one person, a tax consultant, admitted to us that his misleading terms of reference may have been a blessing in disguise. He had been given to understand that he would be advising on the implementation of certain tax reforms. When he reached the country in question he learned that the proposed reforms had fallen through. Largely on his own initiative, he therefore took the opportunity of investigating the tax department's administration which was in a chaotic state, and of suggesting possible improvements. This had been long overdue, but the authorities would never openly have requested an expert for this purpose, for to do so would have been an admission of departmental inefficiency which in turn would have reflected unfavourably on those in charge.

The experience of this tax consultant must be regarded as exceptional—by and large misleading job descriptions and faulty briefing have unquestionably been detrimental to the efficacy of technical assistance. For one thing, they have led at times to the wrong people being recruited for jobs, a point discussed in Chapter 3. For another, they have tended to reduce the usefulness of any preliminary work on the assignment which the expert may have done beforehand. In addition the expert may well have gained an unduly optimistic impression of the extent of host country preparations for his mission, thus aggravating the delays and frustrations he has had to contend with on his arrival. A printing expert, for example, was told by External Affairs that a building suitable for use as a printing school would be awaiting him, and that a number of pupils would already be lined up for him to train. But he had been misinformed. There was no building and there were no trainees when he arrived on the scene, and in consequence he had to revise his pre-arranged plans drastically. This involved him at the start of his assignment in a great deal of extra work, much of which was beyond the range of his previous experience.

(iii) However qualified a person may be professionally, it needs to be remembered that his training and experience have been acquired in Australia. When he becomes an expert he will be working in an environment which is in many respects quite unlike his own. His status will change, standards of business behaviour will be different, and so too will the pace of life, social customs, bureaucratic processes, the structure of authority and many other things. And therefore if he is to make a success of his assignment, especially where this involves transmitting ideas and skills to local people, he must be properly briefed in advance on these environmental differences and advised on how best to cope with them—in other words, he must be effectively oriented to working in a developing country. If this is not done, it may be difficult to prevent what a senior government economist in Pakistan described to us as the greatest disaster

that can befall an expert and the project with which he is associated: the expert's alienation from his job and from the society in which he is working.

Unfortunately Australian experts under both the Colombo Plan and the United Nations have received little or no such orientation in the past. One of the matters on which experts were invited to comment in answering the questionnaire was the extent of their knowledge and understanding of the host country's society and culture at the time of taking up their appointment—some indication, albeit very rough and ready, of prior orientation. Of those expressing an opinion, 68 per cent reported that their knowledge and understanding had been poor, 28 per cent fair, and only 4 per cent good. Canberra's advice about extemporising has already been mentioned in connection with assignment briefing, and the same counsel appears all too frequently to have been the only guidance offered the expert on adapting to a new environment. While the easy-going nature of the Australian and his capacity for improvisation and for 'roughing it' may mean that experts from this country do not on the whole require as much preliminary orientation as those from certain other parts of the world, there can be little doubt that some briefing of this general type is desirable. This conclusion has not been reached primarily in consequence of experts complaining to us that they had been inadequately oriented—in fact surprisingly few of them raised the matter of their own accord or criticised the briefing authorities for not having done more. Rather it derives from various things that experts told us in the course of describing some of the problems they had to grapple with on their assignments and from certain remarks made to us by Asian officials.

(iv) Some experts, though not a great many, complained that the briefing they had been given on living conditions had been inadequate or faulty in such matters as the cost of living, transportation, education for their children, climate, health precautions and currency laws. The chief bone of contention under the Colombo Plan seems to have been that the material incorporated in the background notes on countries was compiled primarily for the benefit of embassy staff and in certain respects was therefore misleading. With U.N. experts, on the other hand, the most common complaint was that information had not been sufficiently up to date. A bizarre illustration of this concerns a U.N. adviser in Sabah whose only briefing on living conditions was a document prepared some years before for English colonial officers. 'What', commented this individual, 'I might have done with a polo stick and half a dozen wine glasses in the middle of the jungle intrigued me!' It would be unfair, however, not to add that a number of experts went out of their way to say how satisfied they had been with this aspect of briefing.

(v) Briefing on terms of appointment was occasionally criticised. One individual, for example, claimed that he had been misinformed about entitlements to leave; once again it was a matter of being issued with information mainly intended for diplomatic officers subject to different terms of appointment. But criticism of this kind was sufficiently sporadic to suggest that this facet of briefing has not been a great problem.

(vi) Little attempt was made to brief Colombo Plan experts on Australian policies and institutions (foreign affairs, White Australia, post-war economic development, etc.). Questions in this area were constantly being put to experts by local people they met, and the image of Australia in Asian eyes would probably be more balanced were experts themselves better informed. This at any rate was the view expressed by one expert and has much to commend it. Although briefing along these lines may not have been as vital for Australians serving with the United Nations, they too perhaps would have found it useful.

Measures for Improvement

It is heartening to find that in experts' eyes the quality of briefing has distinctly improved over the years (Table 5). But with over 50 per cent

TABLE 5
Starting Date and Quality of Briefing

Starting date of assignment	Size of sample	Quality of briefing			
		Good	Fair	Poor	Total
	No.	%	%	%	%
1954-9	78	36	27	37	100
1960-4	75	48	23	29	100
Total	153	42	25	33	100

of briefings between 1960 and 1964 poor or only fair, the situation reached by the mid-1960s could hardly have been described as satisfactory even then. It is therefore worth considering what might have been done—and these suggestions for the most part are still pertinent today:

(i) For briefing on the actual assignment to be effective, fuller and more accurate job descriptions were undoubtedly required, with the proviso mentioned earlier that it might have been desirable in certain instances to retain some freedom for manoeuvre. As regards Colombo Plan aid, the Department of External Affairs—especially its embassy staff in Asian countries—ought to have been more insistent that requests for experts be accompanied by detailed information on the duties involved so that individuals did not arrive on the scene with hazy or even mistaken notions about the nature of their project.

(ii) It is questionable whether personnel in Canberra could ever have been expected to go much further in assignment briefing than merely reiterate what was already contained in the written job descriptions; indeed, with fuller job descriptions the need for technical briefing by External Affairs might well have diminished. However, Canberra could probably have done more to put recruits in touch with former experts and others able to be of some assistance: the initiative in establishing these contacts mainly rested with the expert himself.

(iii) Although too little attention was paid to briefing Australian experts on the special problems of working in a developing country, it is not all that obvious how this could have been rectified. The United Nations in 1964 brought out a booklet called *Briefing of International Consultants* which is now being issued to all U.N. recruits in Australia—and to Colombo Plan appointees as well. In this publication the expert is told something about the proper role of an adviser, the kinds of motives that should govern him in performing his duties, ways of gaining the confidence and respect of the local population, relations with counterparts, the need for adaptability, the dangers of operating as if the cultural pattern in underdeveloped countries was the same as in developed countries and so on. Useful though this booklet is, it is doubtful whether it should be regarded as anything more than a first step towards orientation briefing. Because of the booklet's brevity and the broad terms in which its advice is couched, many important points are inevitably omitted or treated superficially. It is nonetheless a move in the right direction, and External Affairs ought at least to examine seriously the feasibility of preparing something of its own along similar lines—preferably a longer publication designed more specifically to cater for the needs of Australians working in Asia. If in addition to producing a booklet of this kind, the authorities were to supply the expert with other material (brochures, reports, etc.) dealing with social, cultural and administrative aspects of the area of his assignment, and were also to do more to put the expert in touch with those with special knowledge of that area—in the case of Indonesian projects, for example, with members of staff at the Australian National University's Research School of Pacific Studies—they would be going a long way towards meeting the criticism of inadequate orientation.

Indeed, if these things were done, and done properly, this might be enough, for briefing carried too far has its own dangers and no expert can possibly hope to be fully pre-conditioned to all the trials and tribulations of working in a strange environment. But some of those with whom we discussed the point—for instance, several experts with a particular interest in educational psychology, and one or two Asian officials—would like to have seen the matter taken a step further with the introduction of formal

orientation courses for all Australian experts or at least for those on longer missions. A suggestion of a similar kind was also put forward not long ago—admittedly somewhat tentatively—by a U.N. investigation team in Thailand. In its own words:

One of the greatest weaknesses of experts is found to be adjustment to Thai social environment and values. It would be advantageous if it were possible to provide, in addition to present superficial briefings, some form of training which would increase the expert's awareness of the necessity of adaptability.¹

The United States has regular induction sessions of this kind for its own citizens about to embark on technical assistance work. What must be remembered, however, is that the United States is involved in foreign aid on a very large scale, with substantial numbers of recruits always on the point of departure abroad and therefore with a steady stream of persons continuously available to attend such sessions. Australia in contrast has a mere trickle of experts. For this reason it may be impracticable for Australia to conduct regular orientation courses similar to those organised in America. But we certainly would not wish to create the impression that nothing can usefully be done, and we suggest that the Australian authorities should at least look carefully into the whole question, bearing in mind that a modest scheme may still be better than nothing. After all, if the Overseas Service Bureau with extremely modest financial backing can successfully run short but intensive orientation sessions for volunteer workers going abroad, it should not be beyond the resources and ingenuity of the government to devise a scheme of its own to help in the orientation of Colombo Plan experts.

Another suggestion that has been put to us is that Australia, together with other donors and in conjunction with the countries receiving aid, should introduce short orientation courses in Asian centres to be attended by experts on their arrival. Pooling resources in this fashion, with the considerable economies involved, would be especially worth while for a nation like Australia which has relatively few experts. Furthermore, courses conducted in the country in which the expert is going to work are likely to be better tailored to the local environment than courses run in the expert's homeland. Delhi University already arranges regular orientation sessions for experts in India, although we do not know of any Australians under the Colombo Plan or the United Nations who have participated. How far the Delhi University scheme has been a success, and to what extent other countries might be expected to fall in with the idea of having more such courses, are questions which unfortunately we have not had the opportunity of investigating. We therefore prefer to keep an open mind on the subject but would like to see the matter taken up

¹ Report of the Thailand Evaluation Team, p. 50.

by the Australian government at the international level, perhaps through the Development Assistance Committee of OECD which Australia joined in 1966. Such courses could function as either an alternative or a supplement to orientation sessions held in the donor countries themselves.

(iv) Following up our earlier reference to briefing experts on Australian policies and institutions, we would suggest that External Affairs prepare a booklet dealing with various topical issues and present a copy to all Australians embarking on technical assistance missions (including U.N. personnel). Such a booklet, which would need to be revised regularly, could be supplemented by offprints of ministerial speeches and so on—all that Colombo Plan experts receive today.

(v) In discussing possible improvements in assignment briefing, we have already had occasion to refer to the more active role that Australian embassy staff in Asian countries might usefully have played in seeing that job descriptions were sufficiently detailed and accurate. In certain other ways, too, the embassies could have done more to help in the briefing of experts. For one thing, they should have ensured that regular and up-to-date information on living conditions was fed to Canberra to provide a basis for one aspect of briefing. For another, they could probably have assisted considerably in orienting the individual on his arrival in the country. One or two experts have praised embassy staff for their helpful advice on adapting to the new environment but it is our impression that new arrivals for the most part have been left very much to their own devices as far as adaptation is concerned. This is unfortunate, as on many issues the knowledge and experience of the embassy staff could have proved invaluable. A particular direction in which embassies might have helped (assuming they were properly acquainted with the intricacies of host country administration, which may not always have been the case) was in advising the expert on the structure of authority in his line of activity—who were the most useful people to get to know, which officials wielded the real power and which were merely figureheads, in what order did protocol require him to approach various public servants, and many more things besides. Most experts were—and still are—given very little guidance on these matters; yet such briefing can be of enormous assistance to the new arrival who desires as quickly as possible to establish effective working relations with local colleagues.

OTHER PREPARATIONS IN AUSTRALIA

As well as proper briefing, it may be necessary or at least highly desirable that certain other steps be taken at the Australian end to ensure that the expert is suitably prepared for his assignment at the time of taking up his

appointment. These further steps are likely to include one or more of the following: additional professional training; language instruction; preliminary work on the assignment; and the arranging of equipment.

Additional Professional Training

Few of the experts we questioned felt they needed—or were in fact given—additional training in their own field of expertise to improve their capacity to handle the job to which they were going. Applicants at the time of selection were not seriously considered for vacant posts unless they already had the necessary qualifications, so that the question of further professional training did not normally arise. Teaching personnel assigned to the French-speaking territories of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam to give instruction in English were an exception. While those chosen for this work generally had wide experience in teaching French to Australian students, such experience rarely extended to teaching English as a foreign language. To meet this deficiency they were required before taking up duties to attend a course in Sydney lasting several weeks, organised by the Commonwealth Office of Education and designed to provide a grounding in the techniques of teaching English to foreigners. Some preliminary training of this kind is certainly desirable in principle, although several who attended the course were rather critical of the way things were actually run. They questioned the appropriateness of the situational method of teaching employed and had doubts about the suitability of a course designed primarily to assist migrant instructors.

Language Instruction

No serious attempt has yet been made under either the Colombo Plan or the United Nations to give experts instruction in the host country's language before leaving Australia. Yet in spite of the fact that all but a handful of experts have been totally ignorant of the local tongue on taking up appointment, few of those we questioned considered this in retrospect to have been any great handicap. For one thing, in Colombo Plan countries English is widely spoken, or at least widely understood, by the educated classes, and for probably the majority of experts day-to-day contact at work has been with people of some education. In countries like Indonesia where English is spoken less extensively, and in assignments involving frequent contact with the general public, experts have normally managed to get by reasonably well with the help of interpreters—quite often their counterparts.

Although inability to speak the local tongue has seldom been regarded as a serious handicap, some experts nevertheless admitted that a knowledge of the language would have been a useful asset, especially as a means of establishing goodwill with local colleagues. This was confirmed in con-

versations we had with Asian officials about particular experts they knew. Several Australians were praised for having taken the trouble to learn the language after their arrival—something that had considerably impressed the locals and was remembered years later when we discussed these experts with them. By the same token, a criticism of one or two experts was that, although they had been stationed in the country for a fairly lengthy period, they had made no serious attempt to acquire even a smattering of local speech.

We have not looked closely into the feasibility of arranging language courses in Australia for some or all experts. Our general impression, for what it is worth, is that the benefits to be gained from such courses would not be sufficient to compensate for the effort and money required to establish and run them. We nevertheless believe that the attention of experts should at least be drawn at the time of recruitment to the possible advantages of acquiring some knowledge of the host country's language, and that those who would like to take the matter further, either before or during their mission, should be given every encouragement to do so.

Preliminary Work on the Assignment

With certain types of project such as those connected with research, it may be possible for the expert to carry out useful preliminary work in Australia before actually taking up his appointment, thereby enabling him to proceed more rapidly and effectively when he reaches the country. For instance, a food technologist assigned to India to investigate the feasibility of making cheese from buffalo milk informed us that before going he made a close study of the literature on the subject, formulated a working hypothesis, and conducted a series of experiments in his own laboratory to test his theory. By the time he started his mission he therefore had a fairly clear idea where he was heading; moreover, it had been a lot easier being able to do the preliminary work in familiar surroundings in Australia.

But only a few experts admitted performing any preparatory tasks. In their very nature, of course, many assignments simply have not lent themselves to this kind of thing. All the same, more could probably have been done in some instances. The experts themselves have been partly to blame: they have been too busy or have not had sufficient foresight or initiative to make the necessary effort. And there are also two other considerations. In the first place, individuals at the time of recruitment have not always had a clear idea of what their assignments were going to entail, owing to the inadequacy of briefing or the vagueness of job description—matters referred to earlier. For example, an accountant posted to an Asian country to plan the introduction of a costing system in a certain industry learned on arrival that he would first have to reorganise the industry's normal

accounting system. He said that had he known this beforehand and been supplied with prior data on the extent of accounting records and on the layout of plant, he could have saved himself a lot of time by doing the bulk of the preliminary work in Australia.

In the second place, experts have sometimes received extremely short notice of their impending departure overseas—too short to make adequate preparations. Thus a veterinary scientist was given only three weeks' notice before going to Burma. In addition to the personal inconvenience of having to leave so hurriedly, such short notice prevented him from doing the preliminary planning he would have liked.

Equipment Arrangements

Many projects sponsored by Australia involve capital as well as personnel, and in these cases the preparations to be made include securing and despatching the necessary equipment. The extent to which preparatory arrangements on the 'hardware' side have been satisfactory in the past, and have aided rather than hampered the work of the expert, is not easy to gauge since experience presents such a diverse picture. A major reason for this is that the nature of the equipment and its links with the expert have tended to vary. At the one extreme are those projects primarily concerned with capital aid where the expert's role has been a subsidiary one (e.g. supervising the installation of a large piece of equipment). In such cases, equipment planning has often been well under way or entirely completed before the expert's appointment, and the expert has had little to do with the arrangements except perhaps to familiarise himself with the capital, check that it is properly packed, and ensure its despatch on time.

At the other extreme are projects mainly centred on the expert—teaching, for instance—where the only Australian capital involved has been small items such as books and other teaching aids required by the expert to transmit his expertise to the local population. The practice here has been to ask the expert once he is appointed to indicate what items of equipment he will be needing.

Between these two extremes is an array of cases where personnel and equipment have been more evenly represented, each having an important part to play in the overall scheme of things. For example, the advisers sent to the Philippines in 1959 to help establish school broadcasting were accompanied by a batch of radio sets to ensure that a substantial number of schools would be able to receive the broadcasts. Similarly, both men and equipment were supplied on a fairly extensive scale for the Khon Kaen road-building project in Thailand, and there can be little doubt that both played an important—indeed crucial—part in the success of that venture.

It is mainly to projects in this intermediate category that one of the most frequent criticisms of equipment planning relates. The bone of contention has been that those who would be using the equipment, and whose views on the matter ought therefore to carry some weight, were not consulted about what to order—sometimes they were not recruited until after tenders for capital had been accepted. Some experts as a result have had to make do with equipment that was not altogether suitable. This, for instance, was the basis of the complaint of a dairying authority sent to a particular Asian country to supervise the installation of an Australian milk-processing machine to aid research and to advise local scientists on its best use. The machine, when installed, proved quite uneconomic to operate: it needed much more milk than could be spared for research purposes. What had especially irked the expert was that this mistake could, in his opinion, have been avoided had he been initially consulted about machine specifications. But he was appointed only after the equipment had been purchased and it was then too late for his own views to be taken into account.²

The merit of seeking the expert's advice before securing equipment in cases where both capital and personnel are important is borne out by the happier experience of those who actually were consulted beforehand about their requirements. For example, after the first two instructors had been chosen for the new artificial limb workshop attached to Manila's orthopaedic hospital, their views were sought about the equipment they would need to run the workshop and their suggestions were adopted. We were told that this was one reason why the project commenced as efficiently and smoothly as it did.

Another aspect of equipment planning that has come in for criticism has to do with the second category of projects mentioned above where ancillary items of 'hardware' such as teaching aids are involved. Although we were informed by the Colombo Plan authorities that experts had been made aware at the time of their appointment that they might apply right away for any items of equipment they thought they would need—indeed, had been encouraged to do so—in practice the system does not seem to have worked particularly well. For one thing, experts have not always taken advantage of the opportunity of asking for ancillary items even though, as events turned out, such aids would have been well worth having at the beginning of their assignment. Three factors probably account for this apparent lack of foresight on the part of experts:

(i) In spite of what the authorities said, it would appear that recruits

² What the critics of course have not always fully appreciated is that pieces of equipment may take many months—perhaps even years—to produce. Where this is so, early consultation with the eventual expert may be very difficult indeed.

have not always fully appreciated the fact that they could ask in advance for items of equipment.

(ii) The length of time between an expert's appointment and the start of his mission has often been too short to permit him to think or do much about arranging equipment.

(iii) Perhaps most significant of all, experts have been reluctant at times to commit themselves until they arrived at their destination and were in a position to see at first hand what their work was going to involve and what equipment was already available. This reluctance in turn largely stems from the inadequacies of briefing mentioned in the earlier parts of this chapter. A teacher who was posted to Thailand is a case in point. He admitted that he had not been anxious to take much teaching material with him as he had not been really sure of the precise nature of his duties until he reached Bangkok.

Another reason for equipment arrangements sometimes falling down at the preparatory stage is long delivery delays. There have been a number of instances of experts who forwarded a list of their requirements to the authorities well ahead of their departure overseas, only to have the frustrating experience of not receiving what they requested until some time after starting their assignments. One case we know of relates to another teacher who asked that certain books should be purchased and despatched so as to reach the host country when he did, and was given an assurance that this would be arranged. But as things turned out, with unfortunate consequences as far as his teaching program was concerned, the books did not arrive until nine months after his mission began. Again, the leader of a public health team discovered before his departure that certain vital laboratory equipment was unobtainable in the host country. He therefore lodged an urgent request to the Colombo Plan authorities for a supply of Australian equipment to fill the gap. This did not arrive, however, until some time after the team had started operations—the delay was in fact so long that one of the team's laboratory technicians meanwhile decided to return home as she felt unable to carry on local training without this equipment.

Delays in capital delivery have not been confined to the preparatory phase of technical assistance. A number of experts have had a similar experience when trying to secure items of equipment after taking up duties. However, discussion of this matter will be deferred to a later chapter when we come to examine the assignment period itself.

PREPARATIONS IN THE HOST COUNTRY

If experts are to get quickly and smoothly into stride on reaching the

host country, not only must they be properly briefed beforehand and other preliminaries at the Australian end be completed, but the aid-receiving country must also take whatever preparatory steps are appropriate, such as arranging counterparts, enrolling students for training courses, and ensuring that supplies of equipment, office space, secretarial staff and other facilities are available. Yet preparations by the host country have often been far from satisfactory, experts repeatedly finding on their arrival that they had to start almost from scratch with local arrangements.

Some idea of the magnitude of this problem may be gained from the views expressed by the 96 experts who discussed host country preparations when answering the questionnaire. Nearly half this number—45 to be precise—described the preliminary arrangements as poor. Although there is no evidence of correlation between the state of preparedness and the degree of assignment success, there can be little doubt that inadequate preparations by the host country have given rise to undesirable delays and frustrations in the initial stages of many missions, sometimes extending the length of the expert's stay quite appreciably. The country attracting most unfavourable comment in this regard was Indonesia, where preparations were described as poor by two out of every three experts; India showed up best with only 29 per cent of cases in the 'poor' category.

The reason for inadequate preparations has not infrequently been the failure of the host country, at the time of lodging its request for an expert, to undertake a thorough and systematic investigation of what the request would mean as far as demands on its own resources were concerned, and a corresponding failure on the part of the donor authorities when vetting the request, to insist on being supplied with full data on the preparatory measures the host country proposed to take. This is illustrated by the case of a certain English instructor who, on arriving at his destination, discovered that nobody had yet been recruited for him to teach, with the result that his first three months were almost wholly taken up in trying to find pupils. The host country authorities had apparently given no serious thought beforehand to the question of who would attend his courses, and his assignment suffered accordingly. A food technologist posted to another country to investigate the feasibility of processing fruit juices locally had the same kind of experience with regard to equipment. If his project had been properly thought out from the very beginning, the authorities applying for his services would have made a preliminary assessment of the basic equipment he would need to do his research work. All that was in fact awaiting him when he reached the country were 'a few optimistic ideas but no equipment', and in his opinion this lack of advance planning contributed in no small measure to the ultimate failure of his mission.

These are only two out of a number of examples brought to our

notice, and they illustrate merely one aspect of inadequate host country preparations. In addition, even when plans have been carefully worked out at the time the request for an expert was made, the host country has not always stood by its commitments. Nowhere perhaps has this been more in evidence than in arranging counterparts, a subject dealt with more fully in Chapter 5. Experts whose job descriptions made specific provision for local counterparts to work alongside them have time and again found, on taking up duties, that counterparts had not yet been nominated—indeed, the host country had often given the matter no thought at all after putting in its request for an expert. The responsibility for failing to abide by commitments, not only with respect to counterparts but on the equipment side as well, may be said to rest primarily with the host countries themselves where political and administrative instability, shortage of funds, and the enormous pressure on scarce resources—facets of underdevelopment—have all tended to make the carrying out of plans a difficult and uncertain business. But the fault lies partly with the donor administrators, particularly embassy officials, who in the past have not always kept as vigilant an eye as they might on the progress being made at the preparatory stage, and have tended to avoid exerting any form of pressure on the host country to ensure that promises are fulfilled. Continuous personal contact, informal as well as formal, needs to be maintained between donor officials and their opposite numbers in the local administration—a close working association which Australian embassy staff, in the period covered by our study, were not very successful in establishing, at least not as successful as the staffs of many other embassies and international organisations.

One reason for host countries being reluctant at times to undertake preliminary work, even though they may have given an undertaking to do so, is worth singling out for special mention. Local officials have not always been certain what facilities would be required by the expert, and have therefore sometimes preferred to wait until they could consult with him personally rather than take immediate measures that might later have to be scrapped. As a veterinary scientist with several missions under his belt put it: 'In my experience the local authorities never start preparations until they actually see you arrive. Otherwise they run the risk of doing something unnecessarily.' Thus a medical technologist on reaching his destination discovered that no arrangements had yet been made about buildings because the authorities there wanted to give him a free hand to choose the most suitable site for a laboratory. The other side of the same coin is illustrated by the case of the physiotherapist who found that a great deal of elaborate equipment, much of it of little use to her, had been acquired by the local authorities in anticipation of her arrival.

What we have just said might suggest that the host country ought so far as possible to hold its hand on making preliminary arrangements so as to give the expert as much latitude as possible, especially where the project is in a new field or where the expert's advice is a crucial element in the assignment. There is good sense in this, but undoubtedly a more important conclusion to be drawn is the desirability of establishing closer contact during the preparatory phase between the expert and those with whom he is to work—a suggestion already put forward in connection with improvements in briefing. The most obvious contact is through personal correspondence, but two further possibilities may also be mentioned:

(i) Where a team rather than a single expert is involved (which normally implies a more ambitious type of project with preliminary planning rather significant), it may be desirable to send the leader of the mission ahead to check on the preparations in progress, make suggestions for changes in plans and supervise final arrangements. In the past this has not invariably been done and even in cases where it has been, the period of time allotted for the purpose has not always been long enough. Thus the leader of an Australian contingent of nurses took up duties only three weeks before her colleagues, and this time proved to be much too short. As a result, preparations at the hospital where the team was to work were still far from complete when the main batch of nurses arrived and the latter were forced to spend several months in semi-idleness.

TABLE 6
Starting Date and Host Country Preparations

Starting date of assignment	Size of sample	Extent of host country preparations			
		Good	Fair	Poor	Total
	No.	%	%	%	%
1954-9	45	24	20	56	100
1960-4	51	45	16	39	100
Total	96	35	18	47	100

(ii) A question we put to those experts personally interviewed was what did they think of the idea of paying a brief visit to the host country at some stage prior to actually taking up their appointment. The reaction was on the whole most favourable, a substantial number indicating that their own missions would probably have benefited had they been given the opportunity of so doing. Some suggested that such a scheme would not only enable the expert to consult with local personnel about the preparations he would like to see carried out and to check on preliminary work already in progress; it would also give him a better appreciation of

his duties and assist him in his own preparatory work—advantages tied up with questions dealt with earlier in the chapter. On the other hand, as several experts recognised, preliminary visits would be fairly costly if widely adopted, and for this reason it is doubtful whether an arrangement of this kind could ever extend beyond a limited range of assignments.

Although the figures in Table 6 indicate that things may have been getting better, host country preparations could hardly be described as satisfactory even by the mid-1960s. Hence the suggestions made above, and any other possible ways in which the donor authorities may be able to effect improvement in local preparations, warrant careful and sympathetic examination.

Counterparts

The majority of those involved in administering aid agree, at least in principle, that the assigning of a local person to work alongside the expert as his counterpart during the period of his mission is a matter of considerable importance. Indeed the counterpart system has often been described as the keystone of technical assistance.

A counterpart is usually regarded as playing three main roles. In the first place, the expert rarely has executive authority of his own to ensure that his ideas are implemented: he is normally there simply to offer advice which the host country is free to accept, ignore or reject as it sees fit. But if he has a counterpart working with him, there is more chance that his advice will be heeded, either because the counterpart is himself the person for whom the advice is intended or because he at least affords a ready channel for communicating the expert's suggestions to the proper quarters.

Secondly, a counterpart may be able to help the expert in a host of practical ways such as by advising him on departmental procedure, lining up contacts, seeking out information, obtaining equipment, and acting as guide and interpreter. The expert would often find his assignment much more onerous and frustrating without assistance of this kind, especially in the early phase when still feeling his way.

Thirdly, in the capacity of understudy, a counterpart is expected to acquire as much know-how as possible from direct contact with the expert, so that when the mission concludes there is someone on hand qualified to carry on where the expert left off and to instruct others in turn. There can be no doubt that in the long run this is the most crucial of the counterpart's roles, closely bound up as it is with the principle that aid should aim at promoting a viable economy capable of developing under its own steam.

Some of the experts who replied to our questionnaire gave their counterparts a good deal of the credit for the successes achieved. In the opinion of the leader of a school broadcasting team which went to the Philippines in 1959, his very able and influential counterpart was largely responsible for ironing out the difficulties encountered at the time and for

the progress made later: school broadcasting is now well established in that country. Similarly, during the last fourteen months of his appointment, a telecommunications engineer in Indonesia was fortunate to have had an extremely active counterpart who succeeded in getting the Indonesian administration to supply money, purchase sites and erect buildings—no mean feat! Again, the excellent co-operation that a wool technologist met with on all sides in India was the result of the good contacts established for him by his counterpart, described as an outstanding personality. Also, in the course of visiting Asian countries we inspected a number of former projects whose continued success could largely be traced back to the activities of counterparts. The counterparts of a team of nurses who completed their Ceylonese mission in 1958, for instance, were still helping to train nurses themselves seven years later; and at a management training centre in Thailand established by the ILO in 1962 with an Australian as team leader, at least 70 per cent of courses were already being conducted by counterparts when we visited it in 1965.

However, counterpart arrangements have not always worked as well as this. Sometimes the expert was at least partly to blame: he may have been difficult to get on with, have lacked the necessary qualifications and experience to train understudies or have been unable to adapt to local ways. One should bear this in mind in the following pages which draw principally on what experts have said and are therefore directed to other aspects of the counterpart problem.

CRITICISM

Absence of Counterpart

Our survey brought to light the rather striking fact that 54 per cent of experts had no counterpart at any stage. This figure may overstate the position somewhat as the question put to experts concerning counterparts appears in retrospect to have been open to misinterpretation; but the proportion of experts without counterparts was certainly quite high, and would have been higher still had allowance been made for the purely nominal character of some appointments. An FAO consultant in Indonesia, for example, informed us that his own counterpart had taken absolutely no part in his project, his nomination being a mere formality. This practice was not unusual, he added.

This suggests another reason for not making too much of the figure of 54 per cent: possibly something like half the experts without counterparts never really needed them. This would have embraced a high proportion of those on fact-finding missions where the duties were restricted to investigating and reporting on specific problems, including the vetting of

potential projects for which requests for aid had been made to the Australian government. It would also have covered doctors lecturing and examining on behalf of such bodies as the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons. According to our reckoning, counterparts in the understudy sense were probably unnecessary in some 40 per cent of all health missions (a field, incidentally, that includes public health officers, X-ray technicians and nurses, as well as lecturers and examiners), compared with an overall figure of less than 25 per cent. Even more striking is the fact that in short-term assignments of under three months where fact-finding and medical missions are largely concentrated, counterparts were not required in possibly 60 per cent of cases.

There are nevertheless many occasions when counterparts ought to have been provided but were not. An inquiry among U.N. Resident Representatives in 1964 revealed that 26 per cent of U.N. experts serving in Asia and the Far East were in this position.¹ Australian experts attached to the Colombo Plan in the early 1960s would certainly have fared no better than this—perhaps a little worse.

Sometimes being without a counterpart has not materially affected the progress made, but has simply meant additional work or worry for the expert. But on other occasions the harm done has been more serious and permanent. For example, with the expansion of secondary education in Malaya after independence, a grave shortage of teachers developed. A crash program was therefore launched to train more teachers, leading in turn to a shortage of teacher-trainers and to the appointment of a number of foreign advisers including the Australian we interviewed. However, neither he nor the majority of his colleagues was supplied with a counterpart, as none could be spared: anybody qualified to teach was posted to a school. When after two years the Australian left, there was thus no Malayan available to replace him as a teacher-trainer and another overseas consultant had to be brought in as a stop-gap. Consequently, although this Australian helped to improve the immediate supply of trained teachers, it is doubtful whether his visit had the lasting impact on the Malayan education system that it could and should have had.

Unfortunately, inadequacy of data makes it impossible to generalise about the closeness of the connection between the presence or absence of counterparts and the degree of success or failure of assignments. But two things are apparent. First, those experts not requiring counterparts have had more than their fair share of success, probably to a large extent because of the limited scope of their operations. Secondly, with longer-

¹ United Nations, *Annual Report of the Technical Assistance Board to the Technical Assistance Committee for 1964*, New York, 1965, p. 273.

term missions such as the Malayan case just cited where counterpart training was supposedly an important objective, the lack of a counterpart can in itself be regarded as evidence of failure. In other words if earlier calculations are correct, something like half the 54 per cent of missions without counterparts may be judged to have been failures in at least one significant respect.

Why have experts not always received the counterparts needed? Several reasons suggest themselves:

(i) In some Asian countries there are simply not enough potential counterparts to go around, partly because of a nation-wide shortage of suitable individuals and partly because low pay and restricted career opportunities in the civil service make it difficult to attract enough such individuals into government service—the chief recruiting ground for counterparts.² Thus in 1961 an Australian was appointed under the Colombo Plan to the executive post of Insurance Commissioner in Malaya. Although it was originally intended that a Malayan should succeed him, no counterpart was supplied as no suitable candidate could be found in the civil service, and the salary necessary to attract somebody from private insurance was well in excess of the government's scale of pay. The expert was thus succeeded by another Australian who was followed in turn by a third before a local replacement could be located. This case, it is true, relates to a very senior position; but the same kind of problem has arisen at other levels as well.

(ii) Government authorities have at times been reluctant to release employees from other duties to take up counterpart positions. This reluctance also largely stems from the shortage of suitably qualified personnel in government service: it is often difficult for the authorities to resist the temptation to employ potential counterparts in more immediately pressing kinds of work. We have already referred to the failure to make an understudy available in Malaya for an expert in teacher-training because this would have meant withdrawing somebody from school-teaching. A similar case occurred shortly afterwards in Singapore when a vocational training instructor had to make do without a counterpart for the entire 12 months of his mission, as none of those eligible could be spared from other work.

Failure to release people from other duties is connected not only with shortages of staff but with bureaucratic and political factors as well. An expert in Pakistan complained that, although he had located several excellent prospects for the post of counterpart, inter-departmental

² This has not been a basic problem in countries like India and Indonesia where, at least in certain areas, there are more than enough 'trained' personnel with university degrees.

jealousies and seniority rules had effectively prevented any of them from being seconded to him. Another expert—this time in Singapore—had much the same story to tell. An extremely able and useful person became his *de facto* counterpart, but when the expert asked that this individual should officially become his full-time understudy, the request was knocked back on the grounds that certain more senior officers might object. Also on at least one occasion, part of the explanation for the Malayan authorities not supplying a counterpart was that no suitable person of Malay race was available for the job and it was against government policy to offer a senior post—which this one was—to a Chinese.

(iii) In some cases the absence of a counterpart can be attributed at least in part to inadequate or faulty planning, in particular to the failure to consider the counterpart question properly when the project was first formulated. All too frequently an expert found on his arrival that no counterpart had been lined up for him yet, by which time it may have been too late to arrange for one, especially if the mission was short. This applies not only to Colombo Plan assignments: in the formulation of EPTA requests for the 1963-4 biennium, account was 'rarely' taken of the availability of counterparts in six out of fourteen countries, and was 'always' insisted upon in only three, according to U.N. Resident Representatives in Asia.³

Other faults in programming have occasionally been responsible for lack of counterparts. A particular person may have been nominated for the post well in advance, but because the expert has taken so long in arriving the arrangement has fallen through. We heard a number of complaints about this from Asian officials, although not specifically with reference to Australian missions and sometimes, one suspects, as a cover for local mismanagement. The scheduling of overseas training has occasionally been faulty as well. An instance of this was the case of an occupational therapist who was without a counterpart for the entire period of her assignment, simply because her intended understudy had been sent to England beforehand to do a training course and did not return until after the expert had gone back home. Lack of counterpart assistance was one of the major reasons for this assignment being an almost total failure.

Delay in Appointment

These reasons for lack of counterparts also go a long way towards explaining a second problem: delays in appointment. In so far as the counterpart is there simply to act as an understudy, such delays may not matter a great deal provided they are reasonably short and the missions

³ United Nations, *Annual Report of the Technical Assistance Board to the Technical Assistance Committee for 1964*, p. 271.

reasonably lengthy. But even a brief time-lag between an expert's arrival on the scene and his counterpart's appointment can be a serious handicap in other respects since, as already indicated, it is in the first days that the expert is often in most need of counterpart support in such matters as arranging contacts, securing equipment and so on. A food technologist with the United Nations in Singapore, for example, was given a counterpart in only the last month of his short visit of three months. He would have been spared a great deal of unnecessary running around, we were told, if a counterpart had been made available earlier to advise him on whom to see and how to obtain the information he required.

Turnover

A third shortcoming of the counterpart system relates to the turnover of personnel. Once appointed, the counterpart ideally ought to continue on the job for the whole of the expert's stay and if necessary for a period afterwards: indeed, on occasions it may be desirable for him to remain permanently attached to the project. Unfortunately this has not always happened. A counterpart has sometimes moved to a new post either while the expert was still there or before subsequent follow-up work had been completed. Under these circumstances the expert's task was made more difficult and his effectiveness reduced, especially if no replacement was provided.

If a counterpart changes jobs it does not necessarily mean that the period of contact with an expert has been a waste of time, for the counterpart's recently acquired expertise is likely to stand him in good stead in his new post. However, in one or two cases which came to our attention, such as that of an Indian factory manager now working in the Middle East, a counterpart subsequently accepted permanent employment overseas. In these instances it is debatable whether the host country itself derives any lasting advantage from expert-counterpart contact.

Even where counterparts have transferred to other jobs in their own country and their time as understudies has therefore not been entirely wasted, more would generally have been gained had they not transferred. We must thus consider the reasons for counterparts leaving. First, there have been a few unavoidable cases of sickness and death. Secondly, and certainly of major significance, there has been the attraction of better-paid jobs in the private sector. An instructor at a vocational school in Singapore, for instance, lost a succession of counterparts during the two years of his mission because of low teachers' salaries and more attractive prospects in industry. (This is not exclusively a counterpart problem. Experts connected with training schemes often complained of trainees switching to private employment on completing their courses, sometimes

taking on jobs quite unrelated to their training.)

The many frustrations that an able counterpart must almost inevitably experience when trying to carry on after the expert's departure have been a third reason for resignations. In local eyes, the status of being a foreign adviser has often lent weight to the expert's authority, enabling him to get things done which might otherwise have been successfully resisted by the host country administration. But the counterpart taking over from the foreign expert has not had this advantage, and we know of a number of cases where a counterpart has sought a transfer not very long after the expert left because he felt he was making little or no headway. For instance, the very able counterpart of an agricultural adviser in Ceylon carried on for a while after the expert departed but finally asked to be transferred because he was being continually obstructed. Although he still works for the same government department, he is now dealing with an entirely different set of problems, despite the fact that he is probably the most highly qualified person in the country in the field in which he assisted the expert.

Fourthly, counterparts have occasionally been re-posted to other jobs by the authorities. With trained personnel in short supply in some countries, governments have been under pressure not only to refrain from appointing counterparts in the first place but to have them switched to more urgent jobs after their appointment—especially after the experts have left. Governments have also been tied down by their own promotion rules. The system of 'promotion in place', whereby upgrading in rank is not necessarily accompanied by re-posting to a new job, has never been employed extensively in most Asian countries. Rather, promotion has usually meant a move to a different post, often in another department or ministry. This is what happened, for example, to the counterpart of an engineer in Singapore. The expert tried to get him back but was prevented from doing so by the inflexibility of the rules governing promotion.

A final possible reason for a counterpart leaving is that the expert himself may have asked for his transfer because of his obvious unsuitability. This does not seem to have happened very often, but one or two cases have been brought to our notice.

Unsuitability

This last point suggests, as a further shortcoming of the system, that counterparts have not always been well chosen in terms of personal character or professional competence. An Australian in Burma, for example, described his counterpart as temperamentally unsuitable. Although a nice enough fellow, he was too emotional and would break down and weep if criticised. A dairying consultant in Pakistan gave as the

reason for his mission being only moderately successful the fact that his counterpart had been a rather elderly clerical officer. A younger man with technical qualifications would have been much more useful and would also have been in a better position to profit from contact with the expert. Again, several Indonesian counterparts were considered to lack the qualities of leadership required to enable the projects to become viable. They were unwilling to exercise—or to learn to exercise—any degree of authority; at the same time they were not prepared to accept the advice and leadership of the expert.

These are not merely isolated cases. On the other hand, the information we have is not complete enough to warrant generalisations about the extent to which Australian experts have had unsuitable counterparts. It is unlikely, however, that Australia has fared significantly better than the United Nations which found that 34 per cent of its experts in Asia and the Far East in 1964 had counterparts judged to be inadequate.⁴

What lies behind these unsuitable appointments? The factors responsible for the other inadequacies of the counterpart system, such as a shortage of qualified personnel, reluctance to release staff from other work, inadequate planning of projects, and the rules and regulations governing promotion—these same things have undoubtedly also been largely responsible for poor appointments. According to officers of the Indian Planning Commission, for example, one of the effects of the Indian government's promotion rules and their inflexible administration has been to encourage the nomination of persons of modest ability and limited promotion prospects to counterpart posts. Selecting those with little chance of promotion has enabled the turnover of counterparts to be kept down without having to tamper with promotion procedures. Furthermore, even where the best counterparts have been chosen, their standard of performance and usefulness to the expert may sometimes have suffered through their having had one eye continually on promotion. We were told this by an official of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, who claimed it was perfectly natural for a counterpart to regard his training under an expert primarily as a step in the promotion ladder. This was not a matter of human weakness, the official added, but was the consequence of a widespread conviction in the civil service that an expert's activities were bound to be 'smothered within the departmental jungle' after his departure, and it was therefore only to be expected that a counterpart would endeavour to exploit the situation to his own best advantage while the expert was still on the job.

One further comment needs to be added. Some of the faults which

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 273.

experts found with their counterparts were probably more closely connected with national temperament and the country's social and political *milieu* than with special traits in the counterparts themselves. For instance, the tendency observed by some experts in India and Pakistan for counterparts to keep their newly acquired knowledge to themselves instead of passing it on to others beneath them in the administrative hierarchy must be regarded largely as a product of the social structure in the countries in question, a structure discouraging contact between different grades of workers.

POSSIBLE ACTION

These criticisms of the way the counterpart system tended to function in the 1950s and early 1960s indicate room for improvement. Those administering aid in the countries we visited were generally aware of this. At the same time, however, the attitude was commonly adopted that everything depended on increasing the supply of potential counterparts, which would inevitably take time. In the meanwhile, to quote a typical comment, 'where counterparts are not available at all when a task has to be undertaken, the donor country should be prepared to waive the counterpart condition temporarily and provide the services of experts to carry out the particular tasks'.⁵ Unfortunately this sometimes seems to have fostered the idea that nothing could be done immediately to make the counterpart system function better. But there were in fact a number of steps that could possibly have been taken right away—steps involving the Australian government as well as recipient countries.

In the first place, more effort might have been made to ensure that counterpart arrangements were adequately considered when projects were initially being drawn up and vetted. The Australian government should have been firm in refusing to participate in projects of the kinds requiring counterparts until counterparts had actually been nominated or at least until a definite undertaking had been given that this would be done before experts arrived. It might indeed have been desirable had the principle been adopted that no expert requiring counterpart assistance should be allowed to leave Australia to take up his duties until told who his counterpart was to be. According to the Indian Planning Commission, it was current Indian policy to insist on the names of counterparts being communicated to experts before their arrival, but judging from the complaints of Australians serving in that country this was not always adhered to.

In the second place, more could perhaps have been done to ensure

⁵ *Draft Review of the Second Five Year Plan. Technical Assistance and its Co-ordination*, Prime Minister's Department, Kuala Lumpur, February 1963, p. 6.

that counterparts, once appointed, were retained in their posts as long as their services were required there. One suggestion put to us was that at least two counterparts should be assigned to each foreign consultant so that the expertise acquired was not subsequently lost through the illness, retirement or untimely promotion of a single understudy. However, this was hardly a feasible proposition in those countries short of potential counterparts. Another suggestion was that 'promotion in place' should be more widely adopted. This would undoubtedly have met with considerable opposition from local administrators, and there was perhaps not a great deal that Australia could have done to hasten a reform of this kind. But the experience of a radio broadcaster in India is interesting in this connection. Because of the close liaison he established with the Indian Planning Commission, the counterparts he trained for All India Radio were subsequently retained in the same jobs despite heavy political and administrative pressure from certain quarters to have them transferred in accordance with normal promotion procedures. This at least raises the possibility that an active Australian official on the spot might in time be able to loosen some rigidities of the promotion system as they affect the counterparts of Australian experts. It might also be possible for such a person to use his influence to ensure that counterparts are not too readily transferred to other government jobs after experts leave.

In the third place, counterparts might have been better chosen at times. This would perhaps have meant offering higher salaries and improved conditions of employment to attract a superior class of applicant, if such things could have been done without upsetting salary and employment conditions throughout the entire government sector. Furthermore, it might have been possible in certain circumstances to have arranged for Australia to participate in the selection of counterparts. The final responsibility for selection must always rest with the aid-receiving countries themselves, but it was hinted to us in one Asian country that there is no reason why Australia should not have had a hand—at least informally—in choosing the counterparts to be attached to Australian experts. But before this could occur, so we were told, Australia needed to strengthen its aid organisation in that country and establish closer liaison with the local agencies responsible for administering aid.

Another way of improving quality would be to let the expert choose his own counterpart after arrival or in the course of a preliminary visit to the country. This in effect is what happened when an ILO expert discovered, on reaching Korea, that no counterparts had been appointed but that arrangements had been made for him to interview about a dozen prospective candidates for the two counterpart positions offering. The obvious drawback of this scheme is that it rules out the possibility of the

counterpart doing preparatory work on the project or assisting the expert when he first arrives (unless selection is made on a preliminary visit). Experts unfamiliar with a country and its people, moreover, may not always be in a good position to judge between candidates. Finally, there is no certainty that any of the potential counterparts lined up for the expert will prove to be suitable.

A further way of improving the quality of counterparts would be to bring more of them to Australia for formal study or practical training. Such trips were of course already fairly common by the mid-1960s. In some cases persons nominated for counterpart posts had been sent abroad for preliminary training before their assignments began so that they would be in a better position to cope later on. Prior to a T.B. survey team visiting Singapore in 1958, for example, several prospective counterparts were invited to Australia for a brief period to gain experience in this work. The same thing occurred more recently when a group of Thai engineers and technicians was brought to Australia to work with the Snowy Mountains Authority, subsequently returning to Thailand with a team from the Authority and a large amount of equipment to build feeder roads in the north-eastern part of the country. In other cases persons who later became counterparts had attended overseas courses without any definite understanding that they would subsequently be attached to Australian experts—although their selection afterwards as counterparts was probably influenced by the fact that they had previously had this training. Two school broadcasting experts in Thailand a few years ago, for instance, had as their counterparts two young women who had previously gained valuable experience with the Australian Broadcasting Commission in Sydney and Melbourne. In yet other cases counterparts had gone overseas during or after the expert's term of appointment, their trip frequently being arranged by the expert himself to consolidate the training already given.

These overseas trips appear in the main to have been well worth while in the sense of making for better qualified and more effective counterparts, although occasionally the timing could have been improved. But it is doubtful whether enough was or is being done in this direction. One of the advantages that might be expected to follow from nominating counterparts earlier, and from the better planning of projects generally, is that more such overseas courses could be arranged, thus helping further to raise the supply and quality of counterparts.

Host Country Support

What was said in the previous chapter must not be taken to imply that counterparts are the only members of the host country to be closely connected with technical assistance operations. Most experts in the course of their missions have had dealings with many people besides their counterparts including, for example, departmental and sectional heads, the counterparts' associates, apprentices and other trainees, and clerical staff. And not surprisingly, the manner in which such individuals and the organisations behind them have gone about their duties has often had a significant bearing on the progress experts have been able to achieve. This is borne out in the comments received on two important issues raised in the questionnaire. The first has to do with the degree of co-operation of local personnel with whom experts came into contact, and the second with the efficiency of those sections of the host country's administration relevant to assignment activities.

CO-OPERATION

Local co-operation was one of the subjects we specifically invited individuals to comment on in their overall evaluation, and nearly 70 per cent of those who completed the questionnaire provided us with enough

TABLE 7
Host Country Co-operation and Administration

Rating	Degree of host country co-operation		Standard of host country administration	
	No.	%	No.	%
Good	126	77	38	26
Fair	31	19	53	36
Poor	7	4	55	38
Total	164	100	146	100

data to rate their experience 'good', 'fair' or 'poor'. The results, recorded in Table 7, indicate that three out of four experts were apparently well

satisfied with their reception—a higher proportion than one would perhaps have anticipated. Some in fact made a special point of emphasising how very impressed they had been with the courtesy and attentiveness of their contacts and with their desire to oblige in every way possible. A person who had been in Singapore went so far as to say, 'The degree of co-operation was better than I could expect in comparable circumstances in Australia.' Furthermore, only a small fraction of the remaining quarter or so of experts went so far in their criticism as to warrant labelling their experience 'poor' rather than 'fair'.

Technical assistance operations appear in much happier light in this regard than when we simply look at the assignment success figures (Table 8, bottom line), instances of 'good' co-operation outnumbering 'most successful' missions by almost two to one. Not that co-operation is necessarily irrelevant to success or failure; Table 8 points to assignments having had a distinctly better chance of success when co-operation was good than when it was poor or only fair. Admittedly, the statistical connection could be spurious for several reasons and therefore probably deserves no more than passing mention. There are nevertheless a number of specific things about co-operation and its implications which our investigations have revealed that are worth attention.

TABLE 8
Host Country Co-operation and Assignment Success

Degree of host country co-operation	Size of sample	Degree of assignment success*			
		Most successful	Moderately successful	Failure	Total
	No.	%	%	%	%
Good	120	50	48	2	100
Fair	31	19	71	10	100
Poor	7	14	86	0	100
Total	158	42	54	4	100

* Up to time of expert's return to Australia.

European Expatriates

During the transition period after such territories as Malaya, Singapore, Laos and Cambodia gained their independence, the problem of finding suitable local personnel to take over posts previously held by Europeans led the authorities to retain the services of a number of colonial officers, some of whom wanted to stay in any case for personal reasons. Whether they were still living in the past and failed to appreciate the extent to

which their power and status had diminished, or whether they were only too conscious of their increasingly tenuous positions—whatever the explanation, these European expatriates often seem to have resented the presence of experts and therefore have not been as co-operative as they might. The endeavours of a young Australian teacher in what used to be part of French Indo-China, for example, were continually thwarted by the way certain French residents behaved. He was eager to train a nucleus of local English teachers who would be capable in turn of instructing others, but his problem was that the teaching of English was still mainly in the hands of the French. The latter were anxious to maintain their near-monopoly of English teaching and were therefore opposed to the introduction of changes that would qualify local people for similar work. This same expert also encountered stiff resistance from French officials attached to the military academy where he taught for part of each week. They regarded the army as their own special sphere of influence and did what they could to make him feel an interloper.

Other instances of lack of co-operation involving Frenchmen could be cited, but it would be wrong to mention only the French. English expatriates, too, have come in for their share of criticism. A teacher again, this time in Malaya, pointed out to us that many of the obstacles he had to surmount in trying to enlist support for his mission were put in his way by the English education officers still serving there. And while an engineer in Sabah succeeded in getting on extremely well with the local people, he had to admit that his professional relations with a certain Englishman employed by the host government were somewhat strained. The latter had been a fairly senior British colonial official in that country in pre-independence days, and rather resented having to take advice from an Australian who had been in Sabah only a short while.

Although complaints along these lines have occurred too frequently to be ignored, in fairness to those criticised it should be pointed out that we have not had the opportunity of hearing their own side of the story. In any case as practically all the Europeans who originally stayed in government employment have been replaced by now, expatriate difficulties are more or less a thing of the past.

Local Interest

The extent of local co-operation often seems to have depended on how far the people in the host country, closely connected with the assignment, have felt that the job was worth doing and have genuinely wanted the expert to succeed. A forestry consultant's experience affords a good illustration of this. In the course of an overseas trip under Colombo Plan sponsorship, he had occasion to visit two separate Asian countries to give

advice on growing Australian trees. Co-operation was excellent in one country but disappointing in the other. The main reason for this difference in reception, in the expert's opinion, was that in the former country the initiative to seek Australian advice had come from an active group of local forestry officers who recognised that a problem existed and were anxious to find a solution. In the second country, in contrast, no one had given the matter much thought or seemed particularly concerned about the outcome. A tree enthusiast on the staff of the Australian embassy had apparently conceived the idea, and it had then been 'sold' to the country's authorities as something worth following up.

Other experts have made the same point, but two further illustrations will suffice for our purposes. A customs officer, assigned the job of revising a country's tariff nomenclature, was full of praise for the readiness of his contacts to co-operate. He attributed this to the fact that the parties concerned wanted change: treasury officials were attracted by the prospect of being able to raise more tax revenue, while the customs authorities were keen to see tariff administration simplified to lighten their task. On the other hand, an agricultural scientist complained that his experimental research on rice production had been held back through lack of 'a co-operative spirit of endeavour', to use his own phrase. The predominant local response was one of apathy: no one in authority seemed prepared to identify himself wholeheartedly with the work the Australian was doing or was especially concerned about improving rice yields. This local indifference, according to the expert, was the chief reason why his mission failed to have the impact initially expected.

Manual Work

A problem to which our attention was repeatedly drawn was the difficulty of securing full co-operation from educated people—indeed from anyone with a modicum of status—when it came to manual activities. This criticism was prompted mainly by experience in India, Pakistan, Ceylon and (to a lesser extent) Indonesia—countries with deep-rooted class divisions, birth and family position traditionally counting for more than wealth or merit. Social barriers, it is true, are now beginning to disintegrate with the upsurge in education and increasing employment opportunities. But social attitudes, including the stigma attaching to manual work, die hard.

The consequences of aversion to soiling the hands have at times been trivial as far as technical assistance operations are concerned. For example, when a jeep transporting two Australian engineers became bogged on an isolated country road in Vietnam, the chauffeur flatly refused to help extricate the vehicle, on the ground that it was degrading work that only

coolies should be asked to do. In the end the experts themselves got out and pushed while the chauffeur sat firmly at the wheel.

But distaste for manual jobs has had more serious implications on some occasions. Several agricultural scientists, for instance, were severely handicapped in their field work because the officers assisting them were not prepared to leave their offices to give a helping hand in inspecting crops. A common practice was for locals to delegate tasks of this kind to subordinates, but the latter were neither properly qualified nor adequately briefed to play an effective part. Australian engineers have told of similar experiences: one or two of them, for example, had working under them university graduates of some years' standing who had never at any time in their lives actually handled a piece of equipment—not so much as an oil-can. Then again, and more specifically, there was the case of the instructor helping to train science teachers who explained to us that as long as he confined his classes to book-work he received the fullest co-operation, but that when he moved to the laboratory his pupils became obstreperous, having been brought up to regard involvement in practical matters as somehow degrading. For much the same reason, local kindergarten teachers were offended when an expert in pre-school training resorted to making her own finger paint and, in addition, tried to get them to apply certain therapeutic techniques necessitating physical contact between teacher and child. They protested that this was the area of responsibility of domestic servants and not the business of people with teaching qualifications.

Some experts proceeded to point out, however, that the response became more sympathetic after a while as their own less inflexible attitude to work began to make an impact locally. The science instructor with laboratory trouble, for instance, mentioned this. Similarly, a team of Australian nurses, on first taking up hospital residence in an Asian capital, was dismayed to find local nurses refusing to do many of the less congenial chores associated with attending to the needs of patients. But by showing a ready willingness to tackle even the most unpleasant tasks themselves, the Australians in due course succeeded in breaking down this prejudice, and by the time they departed local nurses were cheerfully co-operating in every aspect of hospital work.

In this respect Australians are often said to make particularly good experts—or at any rate better experts than many. Their comparative indifference to status (including their own), their capacity to improvise, and their practical bent are all qualities which, to the extent they rub off on to the local population, are likely to weaken the opposition to physical work. While generalisations of this kind must be treated with caution, there is probably some truth in the claim. It perhaps helps to explain why

in areas of technical assistance involving practical application as well as transmission of ideas—agricultural extension work and vocational training, for example—the standing of Australian experts is especially high.

Further Considerations

To round off discussion, it is worth setting down a number of other specific things that experts have had to say on local co-operation and their own handling of the situation:

(i) A teacher-training consultant frankly admitted that he had never enjoyed such kindness as he experienced in Thailand. He added:

However, one had to learn to feel through one's pores whether one was getting actual co-operation or just friendliness. It is not unusual for the Thai to say 'yes' when he means 'no'. With us this would be interpreted as evasiveness, but with the Thai it is a social convention which enables him to avoid putting an affront upon someone. A direct 'Let's get down to brass tacks' frontal attack did not usually elicit co-operation. But if an idea was mooted, dropped for a while, glanced at, given time to soak in, chatted over, and then accepted, the Thai were much more co-operative—and much more likely to follow a scheme through.

(ii) Another educationalist who went to the same country to investigate the merit of certain reforms previously thought up by the Thais themselves found the locals most uncommunicative until it dawned on him that the questions he was putting to them had the effect of drawing attention to shortcomings in their own proposals: being silent, in other words, was their way of maintaining face. He therefore adopted the alternative approach of making positive statements and asking the locals their opinion. This worked well and he was able to learn all he wanted to know.

(iii) The following comment came from an expert attached to a sugar mill:

The degree of co-operation with contacts in the host country could not have been better in so far as they were anxious to be co-operative; and at no time was there any antagonism. However, this co-operation did not usually extend to making major efforts to carry out the advice tendered. This was not a matter of their disagreeing with the advice given but reflected their general approach to all changes in routine. It seemed to be a combination of fear to tackle something new, a general dislike of hard work, and (with technical staff) the attitude that a man with a university degree should not have to soil his hands. It seemed, by comparison with Australian mills, an extremely strange set of circumstances, where a body of technical men were obviously keen to hear how to improve their mill, obviously keen to see it being done, but disliked the prospect of having to do it themselves.

(iv) A lawyer who had been in Kuala Lumpur observed:

The greatest difficulty I experienced came from the reluctance of the local

administration to put forward explicit proposals or to trenchantly criticize my proposals. I understand that this is a common experience of people who go to Malaysia on this type of project. They tend to regard the 'expert' as being responsible for providing all the answers and do not feel obliged to co-operate with him in producing new answers for their own particular problems.

(v) A conclusion reached by a number of experts from experience in countries like India or Pakistan was the crucial importance of enlisting the support of senior officials before rank and file staff could be relied upon to co-operate fully. An educational adviser to the government of Pakistan, for instance, had this to say:

Communication within an educational (and no doubt other) authority in Pakistan proceeds 'downwards' fairly readily, but 'upwards' communication is almost negligible. I found myself making little impact for several weeks until, after much persistence, I gained an interview with the Secretary, National Ministry for Education, and established the broad outlines for the mission. The change in attitudes thereafter became marked at all levels. I encountered a similar experience in attempting to work out practical details with the Provincial Ministry of West Pakistan. Here again, it was only after I persisted in interviewing the Secretary to establish policy that various officials changed mere courtesy to active co-operation. It became clear, as I later confirmed in East Pakistan, that it is mandatory in Pakistan first to seek and obtain clear approval of the top man in order to achieve any practical effectiveness in a project. Less senior officers will not make a move in initiating action.

ADMINISTRATION

The friendliness of local contacts and their willingness to co-operate are insufficient guarantee in themselves that experts will have the host country's full support during their period of assignment, since the desire to be helpful must be backed by an administration capable of converting good intentions into effective action. Therefore a further question we put to experts was what they thought of the efficiency of the relevant sections of the host country's administration.

Experts were far more critical of administrative shortcomings than of lack of co-operation, if the findings in Table 7 are any guide. The disparity would indeed have been still more pronounced had the table been restricted to missions begun between 1960 and 1964, for co-operation was somewhat better in the later years but administration much the same.

The two sets of findings tally, however, in at least a couple of respects. First, the geographical pattern is broadly similar. Thus Singapore and Malaysia show up well on both counts, while Ceylon and Pakistan show up badly. (Indonesia is the notable exception: the Australians working

there have been far less happy about administration than about co-operation.) And administration, like co-operation, seems to have exerted some influence on assignment performance (Table 9), although the statistical link could be partly or wholly spurious—an observation already made in connection with Table 8.

Before reviewing the administrative obstacles that have had to be contended with, we should make it clear that the present chapter is solely concerned with the actual assignment period. Local administrative issues of a pre-mission character were discussed earlier and there is no need to go over the ground again. Similarly, questions relating to post-mission administration will be put aside for the moment, not because they are unimportant but because it is more convenient to consider them in Chapter 10 when we deal with various aspects of follow up.

TABLE 9
Host Country Administration and Assignment Success

Standard of host country administration	Size of sample	Degree of assignment success*			
		Most successful	Moderately successful	Failure	Total
	No.	%	%	%	%
Good	36	67	30	3	100
Fair	51	41	57	2	100
Poor	55	31	62	7	100
Total	142	44	52	4	100

* Up to time of expert's return to Australia.

Red Tape

Replies to our questionnaire contain a good deal of disparaging comment on the complexity of local administrative procedures—procedures reflecting, among other things, a shortage of well-trained public servants and an over-abundance of poorly-trained ones, the tendency to spread work-loads (a characteristic feature of underemployed economies), and a marked reluctance to reach decisions without first consulting those in higher authority. A vocational instructor in India, for example, complained that sixty-four separate steps were involved every time he placed an order for further materials for his training program. Although the number of steps could quite easily have been cut by three-quarters, his efforts to have the system streamlined got him nowhere. An air traffic control officer in Indonesia had a similar experience. To requisition a piece of equipment—even an item of very small value such as a radio tube—he had to obtain

signatures from a whole array of officials almost up to the head-of-department level. The problem, as he saw it, was the failure of Indonesian public servants to delegate authority to those working under them.

Red tape of this kind has tended to hamper experts in their work by compelling them to put an undesirable amount of time and effort into formal paper work and other essentially routine duties. Not infrequently it has also meant frustration and uncertainty, preventing the individual from proceeding with his mission as speedily as he would have wished because requests to the authorities for advice or action—sometimes on matters vital to assignment success—have taken so long to be processed.

Two ramifications of these processing delays deserve special mention. First, although experts on longer-term assignments have generally had greater contact with the authorities because of the nature of their jobs and the length of their stay, and have therefore had more opportunity of encountering the adverse effects of protracted decision-making, administrative delays have sometimes proved especially embarrassing for those on shorter-term appointments in view of the very limited time at their disposal. One Australian whose visit to Indonesia had to be fitted into a mere three weeks, informed us that the least satisfactory aspect of his mission was the frustratingly slow and complex system in Djakarta for issuing him with a travel permit for Bandung. The whole of his itinerary had to be modified in consequence, and he was thereby precluded from completing part of his investigation.

Secondly, it is probably during the initial phase of their work, while still feeling their way and endeavouring to get their projects moving, that the majority of experts have had to rely most heavily on the host authorities for decisions—decisions dealing, among other things, with the appointment of counterparts and supporting staff, the requisitioning of equipment, and the clarification of powers and duties. But it is precisely at this critical juncture that local decision-making has often been so slow, experts not yet having been in the country long enough to establish personal contacts within the administrative hierarchy or to pick up useful tips on ways of short-circuiting the bureaucratic process.

Besides extra paper work for themselves and delays in having their affairs attended to, some experts also mentioned that cumbersome procedures had dissipated the energies of the local personnel who were supposed to be assisting them. Although the colleagues of a certain expert in Thailand were capable enough and most willing to co-operate, departmental policy was based on the principle of divided control and 'letting everybody have a finger in every pie'. The local staff were obliged to attend endless committee meetings at which nothing important was ever decided but everyone was expected to say his piece. These meetings made

tremendous inroads on their working hours and prevented them from giving the expert more than a fraction of their attention.

Lack of Co-ordination

One of the major obstacles to efficient administration in Asian countries has been the failure on the part of different sections of government to co-ordinate their separate endeavours. Poor inter-departmental liaison reflecting fundamental weaknesses in the organisational structure of government is to some extent to blame. But an important additional factor is the tension and even open hostility that have all too often characterised inter-departmental relations—a product of various forces both political and personal.

A number of experts complained about this in recounting their own experiences. The problem usually arose from the fact that, although the person in question was normally attached to a specific department or institute, his work tended to overlap with the activities of one or more other bodies. The progress of his assignment therefore depended to some extent on maintaining close and friendly contact with other sections of government—not an easy task where inter-departmental liaison was poor.

In the Philippines, for example, broadcasting to schools is the joint responsibility of two organisations—the Bureau of Public Schools and the Philippine Broadcasting Service—which have not always seen eye to eye on policy issues. This showed up some years ago when a school broadcasting team was sent to Manila to advise the Bureau. Many of the problems confronting the team in the early part of what eventually proved a highly successful mission arose from the failure of these two organisations to agree. A productivity consultant had a similar experience, this time in Indonesia. Originally he was attached to the Department of Labour but was unable to make much headway, since the majority of industrial undertakings that interested him were under the control of other ministries with which his own department had little effective communication. Eventually the problem was solved by his being transferred to the Ministry of Basic Industries. A food technologist's assignment in Thailand, however, had a less satisfactory ending. He managed to locate some research equipment he badly wanted in another government department where it was standing idle. But inter-departmental wrangling effectively prevented him from laying hands on it, and in his opinion this was one of the chief reasons for the failure of his mission.

Inadequate co-ordination has been particularly troublesome in India and Pakistan owing to the federal nature of their governments. With two layers of authority, administration is necessarily more fragmented and there is greater scope for rivalry and misunderstanding. This point was

mentioned by at least half a dozen experts who had been to those countries. In one case, an engineer blamed the division of control between central and State bodies for the slow progress of his Indian road-making project. While the equipment was owned by the former, supervision of the work on the site was delegated to a State instrumentality. Unfortunately, however, the central government failed to give the State body sufficient authority to enable it to conduct operations to the best advantage. Much the same comment was also made by a technician sent to India to supervise the assembling of equipment. Responsibility for carrying out the job was entrusted by the Department of Economic Affairs to the various State governments in whose territory the equipment was situated, but because of poor liaison the project got off to a very shaky start. There was frequent misunderstanding, even on such fairly trifling matters as personal accommodation. According to the expert, divided responsibility was the main trouble.

One further thing must be said. While the lack of co-ordination alluded to by experts can probably be attributed in large measure to basic shortcomings in public sector organisation and in the qualifications and experience of government employees, the problem is also partly one of faulty procedures in the selection of the technical assistance projects—something that the Colombo Plan and U.N. authorities should have been in a position to help rectify. All too often, it would seem, a department's request for an expert was approved by the host country's aid-vetting body without the matter at any stage being referred to other departments with overlapping interests to ascertain their view and enlist their co-operation. In consequence, the expert was not necessarily attached to the organisation able to make best use of his services; and even when he was, other government agencies may have been unwilling or unable to give him as much assistance as he would have liked simply because they were not put in the picture beforehand. If the donor authorities, before committing themselves to aid, had firmly insisted that all parties with a possible stake in proceedings must first be consulted, this would almost certainly have helped lessen the co-ordinating problem experts encountered on taking up their appointments.

Financial Matters

Much of the criticism of administration has tended to be centred on issues of finance. This is not altogether surprising in view of what has already been said about inadequate initial planning of technical assistance projects and the many competing claims on the limited funds at the disposal of host governments.

Such criticism has mostly had to do with two things. In the first place,

in order to obtain the money needed to carry on their work experts have sometimes been forced to devote a great deal of valuable time to the tedious and frustrating business of negotiating with the authorities. We were informed by an embassy official in Bangkok, for example, that one of the most trying problems for a team of Australian road builders in north-eastern Thailand was the necessity of negotiating with the Budget Bureau every time road construction reached a point where another bridge needed building, the original road appropriations making no provision for outlay on bridges. Another case that bears quoting—in Pakistan this time—concerns a scientist assigned to help organise a newly established institute. Most of his time was taken up with trying to induce the Pakistani authorities to make sufficient funds available to set the institute on its feet. He in fact came to the conclusion that the shrewd and energetic director appointed to run the institute had asked for an expert mainly to use as a lever to prise more money out of the government. In these circumstances, much of what the scientist did on his mission had the quality of shadow-boxing.

In the second place, where experts have ended up without enough funds, project plans have had to be pared. Thus a radiographer in Sarawak told us that the shortage of local finance had meant that only two students could be trained each year as X-ray technicians, whereas he felt he was capable of handling up to eight without much difficulty. A similar situation arose at a vocational training school in a neighbouring country where a team of Australians worked. Budgetary crises on more than one occasion prevented the host government from meeting its financial commitments. It then became necessary for the school to do contract work for business firms to raise funds to keep all sections operating. This naturally affected the school's training program—the primary purpose of the project—but the only alternative would have been to close down some classes altogether for lack of materials.

It was suggested several pages back that the donor authorities might have done more to anticipate difficulties of co-ordination. The same is true of finance: indeed, the scope for donor action here may well have been considerably greater. It would have been partly a matter of insisting on careful and thorough estimates of local costs and the host country's capacity to meet them, at the time the expert's services were being sought, and partly of keeping a close watch on proceedings during the mission phase to ensure that the host country continued to honour its financial obligations.

Professional Conduct

Efficient administration demands that government employees are not

tempted to let personal considerations such as private financial gain and employment aspirations of relatives affect their professional conduct. This is easier said than done, especially in developing countries where public servants are poorly paid, friends and relatives expect privileged treatment and checking on job performance is extremely difficult, and where the temptation to put personal considerations first is therefore correspondingly harder to resist. It did not need our inquiry to bring this to light; but we were anxious to learn how far so-called administrative malpractices may have interfered with technical assistance operations.

Fewer experts than one might have anticipated drew our attention to this problem—thirty or forty in all—and most of these dealt with the matter in rather general terms without indicating precisely how their own assignments had suffered. They merely spoke of corruption being prevalent and left it at that, or alluded to nepotism and political jobbery but not to the extent of citing specific instances bearing on their own work.

From the limited material to hand, however, we have singled out the experiences of three experts to illustrate the type of problem some missions have been up against. Thus a housing body with which a U.N. adviser was associated did no actual building for a period of over two years, although constructing houses was ostensibly its major function. The reason for this inactivity, we were told, was that so many people had used influence to get themselves or their friends placed on the organisation's pay-roll that no money was left over to purchase building materials. Then again an expert attached to a hospital in a second country complained about the way apparatus was issued to patients. The expert's efforts to ensure that equipment went to those who most needed it were frequently thwarted by the hospital authorities who stood to gain financially by offering supplies to the highest bidder. As a final illustration we mention the case of an individual in a third Asian country who invariably had to wait many weeks for operational documents to be published. This was because the officials responsible for arranging publication used to make the rounds of the various city printers to see which firm would give them the largest commission on the order.

Manpower Problems

It is not our intention to examine exhaustively every aspect of host country administration that might conceivably have some bearing on technical assistance operations. This would be a major undertaking in itself, requiring substantially more research than we have had the opportunity of doing. But it would be wrong not to refer at least briefly to one further complaint that cropped up time and again in replies to the questionnaire.

It concerns the calibre of some of the local people with whom experts were brought into contact.

Attention was drawn in the previous chapter to the difficulty of securing and retaining suitable counterparts. Many experts also indicated that other local personnel with whom they had dealings were something of a disappointment. Thus senior public servants, especially the older guard, were at times said to be too set in their ways to respond sympathetically to the advice of experts. Similarly, junior members of staff were not always qualified or experienced enough to carry out instructions except under close supervision and this had meant extra work and worry for the experts themselves.

Nevertheless, while manpower difficulties should certainly not be underestimated, the problem needs to be viewed in proper perspective. In the first place, to be fair to all concerned it must be pointed out that a considerable number of experts have obviously been pleased with the standard of performance of their contacts. A few have gone so far, indeed, as to attribute the success they achieved mainly to the excellence of their local colleagues. In the second place, lack of technical and administrative know-how is, after all, a basic ingredient of every underdeveloped economy and the main reason for having technical assistance programs. As one Australian expert observed in connection with his own assignment: 'Undoubtedly a lot more could have been accomplished if more numerous qualified personnel had been assigned to work with me and if administration had been smoother, but if these things had been possible it is very unlikely that the services of a foreign expert would have been requested in the first place.'

Donor Support

In this chapter we turn again to the study of the donor's part in proceedings. For although the aid-giving authorities have obviously not been as closely associated with project execution as have experts or local personnel, donor participation should not be regarded as merely a routine matter of paying experts' salaries and the like; nor, on the other hand, has such participation been so effective in practice as to preclude criticism. We therefore propose to say something now about the donor's contribution in the assignment phase, concentrating primarily on the Australian government and its role, but also drawing on U.N. experience.

RESPONSIBILITIES IN PRINCIPLE

The donor link with actual assignment operations may be viewed as the threefold one of keeping abreast of events, offering advice and encouragement, and providing practical assistance when necessary. What basically does each of these duties entail?

Watch-dog Role If the donor body is to make a worthwhile contribution to assignment success, then as a first step it needs to be conversant with the facts—with the obstacles experts are encountering, their suitability for the job, whether projects are likely to be completed on time, the housing and family situation and so on. To acquire this information, embassy and U.N. staff on the spot must not only make themselves readily accessible to any expert who might wish to communicate with them. They must go further and ensure that experts regularly let them know how their work is progressing. They should also maintain contact with local officials and if necessary visit the scene of operations from time to time. Finally, it is desirable that they keep up-to-date records on all current projects. For unless donor staff are alive to what is going on, they can hardly be expected to carry out their advisory and practical duties properly.

Advisory Role When an expert wants information, advice or merely moral support, it is natural that he should turn to the embassy or U.N. staff near at hand. Although the host government is his official employer, the organisation that sent him must in a sense bear ultimate responsibility

for his actions and welfare; and its representatives in the host country, being on location and supposedly familiar with the local scene, should be better placed than anybody else in the organisation to handle his inquiries once he takes up his appointment. At the start of his assignment, for example, he may be anxious to find out certain things about his job, living conditions, protocol, etc. which were not adequately covered by his briefing in Australia. Briefing has already been discussed fairly fully in Chapter 4, including reference to what should be done at the host country end, and need not detain us here. But briefing is only part of the story. Later on in his assignment, particularly if it extends over any length of time, an expert will almost certainly have further occasion to seek guidance. Sometimes of course he will manage to learn what he wants elsewhere—from his counterpart or a fellow expert, for instance. This may not always be possible, however, and it is therefore important that he should be able to turn to the donor authorities whenever necessary. Indeed, on certain questions such as how to go about arranging a fellowship to Australia for one of his trainees or what are the chances of having his term of appointment extended or whether he ought to bring his wife and family out later—on these and other issues, only the donor organisation will really be in a position to advise him.

Just as it requires initiative to be an observant watch-dog, helpful advice also means more than simply offering suggestions on request. If the donor representatives in the host country have their ears close to the ground, they can expect to learn a good deal from local sources about the headway particular missions are making, the difficulties being encountered, and the manner in which individual experts are coping with their problems. And what they discover may at times justify their giving an expert unsolicited information, advice or encouragement. For example, he may have to be told that his handling of local colleagues is a little too heavy-handed: perhaps he is not aware that several of them are resentful and have asked to be transferred. Or information may be to hand that the host government is about to relax import restrictions, and now might be an opportune moment for him to remind the local administration that it has not yet supplied some of the equipment he was originally promised. Or does he know that a project similar to his own has recently been launched in a neighbouring country?—if not, it could be worth looking into. These are hypothetical illustrations, it is true, but they give some idea of the potential range of unsolicited advice.

Three further things ought to be stressed. First, what ultimately matters is the *quality* of the advice given. To this end, being well informed in the sense of being familiar with what is happening is not enough. Capable aid administrators, like capable experts, need good judgment, a

sound grasp of the objects and limitations of technical assistance, and a sympathetic understanding of local problems.

Secondly, although the experts on the job must shoulder the main load as far as tendering advice to the host country is concerned—this after all is their reason for being there—direct consultation between donor staff and local personnel is also highly desirable on occasion. The donor may be able to act as the expert's spokesman in putting across certain views, thus giving them the backing of higher authority, or in bringing such views to the attention of local officials to whom the expert himself has no ready line of communication. Alternatively, the host government may prefer to consult with the donor rather than the expert, perhaps because the expert's behaviour is the subject it wants to discuss, or because wider issues of technical assistance are involved. But this of course presupposes that the parties concerned are in regular contact with each other on reasonably familiar terms.

Thirdly, while donor staff on the spot are best placed to offer the expert day-to-day guidance while he is carrying out his mission, the people at headquarters also have a vital role to play in this connection. Thus when information or advice is sought by a Colombo Plan expert, the embassy may for some reason find it necessary to refer the matter to Canberra for decision. Indeed, a U.N. expert who wants further instructions about his job will not infrequently by-pass the local U.N. representative altogether and communicate directly with the world or regional headquarters of the agency employing him. In the final analysis, therefore, the adequacy of the advisory service provided depends on the performance of the donor authority as a whole—and the same goes for its other duties.

Practical Role The donor body must also be prepared to help its experts in a practical manner when the occasion arises. Admittedly, practical aid in the form of capital facilities, supporting staff and domestic accommodation is primarily the responsibility of the host nation; and where this is so, the donor can influence proceedings only indirectly through its advice. However, some degree of active donor participation is often not only feasible but positively desirable. Particular aspects of living arrangements are a case in point (see Chapter 9). So too is the sending of local personnel to Australia on an expert's recommendation for further training and experience (see Chapter 5). But far and away the most significant practical contribution the donor can make is to supply capital equipment. This matter has already been referred to in Chapter 4, but our attention at that juncture was focused on arrangements prior to experts taking up duties. Although the distinction on the equipment side between the pre-mission and mission arrangements is not always readily identifiable, what we are now concerned with is the capital donors are asked for during

the course of assignment execution, whether this be a relatively inexpensive ancillary item like a set of books or surveying instruments, or a costly printing press for a vocational training school. We shall have more to say later about capital supplies, particularly about the need for promptness of delivery.

STAFF IN ASIAN COUNTRIES

So far we have been concerned with donor support as it ought to be. We must now look at what has happened in practice. How effectively did the Australian government and U.N. agencies carry out the duties entrusted to them during the period covered by our study?

We must mention here that our original questionnaire made no reference to donor-expert relations in the operational phase, and in consequence we were not in a position to assemble any statistics in this field. Fortunately, however, a number of experts raised the subject of their own accord, and we also made sure that the matter was discussed at follow-up interviews. From these two sources, plus contact with various aid officials in Australia and Asia, we have managed to piece together what we trust is a reasonably accurate—albeit impressionistic—picture of donor support.

What struck us most forcibly in questioning Colombo Plan experts about relations with the embassy was the extent of disillusionment. Some were quite outspoken and claimed that the problems encountered in their dealings with embassy staff had been a serious obstacle to mission success. Others were more restrained, merely complaining that they had received little positive assistance from this quarter—or at any rate less assistance than they would have wished.

This unfavourable reaction did not really surprise us; in fact it rather confirmed our own thinking after visiting Asia. We were anxious, however, to hear the views of experts on why the embassy had failed to give them adequate support and in what ways this lack of support had manifested itself.

Source of Problem

The first issue—why adequate support had not been forthcoming—can be dismissed fairly briefly, since relatively few experts broached the subject and those who did confined their attention to one of three things.

Personal Attributes The particular individual at the embassy responsible for handling Colombo Plan business was occasionally described as officious, too casual or simply 'difficult to get on with'. We are not inclined to take such complaints too seriously: experts themselves have had their personal failings and cannot always have been easy to handle. Nevertheless, one or two comments impressed us. A team leader, for

example, in the course of a lengthy assignment, came in contact with a succession of third secretaries and he found that their capacity to cope varied appreciably. Largely because of this, dealing with the embassy proved time-consuming and frustrating during certain phases of his stay.

Heavy Work-load A second complaint was that the embassy staff handling Colombo Plan business tended to be saddled with too many other duties as well and hence had insufficient time to attend properly to experts' affairs. This criticism seems valid enough, for we reached much the same conclusion ourselves after calling on a number of Australian embassies and talking with their Colombo Plan officers. Although for a brief period at least two embassies had on their staff a full-time aid attaché recruited from outside the ranks of the Australian public service on a temporary basis, the day-to-day administration of Colombo Plan activities at the host country end was for the most part in the hands of relatively junior External Affairs officers—usually third secretaries. The ones we interviewed were understandably reluctant to be drawn into a discussion of controversial issues bearing on the policies and practices of their department. However, from what they were prepared to say and the way they spoke, we gained the strong impression that Colombo Plan duties were regarded as something of a chore, and that this attitude derived partly from their heavy work-load—a third secretary was lightly treated if he did not have two or three other regular tasks to perform—but more basically from lack of genuine interest and understanding. This brings us to the final point.

Diplomats as Aid Administrators In recounting their experiences, experts occasionally let drop a remark to the effect that embassy staff were hardly the right people to be responsible for administering aid, as their previous training, current interests and future aspirations were all directed towards diplomatic work. The same view was expressed by Asian officials whose complaint was not so much that embassy personnel were technically unqualified, in the sense of not being engineers or educationalists, as that their involvement with technical assistance was too passive and half-hearted. If such criticism was justified, as we believe in some degree it was, then certain changes in the administration of Australian aid would appear to have been called for—but more about this in the concluding chapter.

The reason why no reference has yet been made to the United Nations is that its staff in Asia were much less criticised. One or two U.N. officers, it is true, came in for unflattering comment on personality grounds. A certain Resident Representative, for example, was described as being more concerned with 'the ceremonial trappings of ambassadorial status' than with the welfare of experts in the field. But of the other two complaints

levelled at embassy staff—that they had too many other jobs and that as career diplomats were hardly the right persons to be administering aid—almost nothing was said, which suggests that the machinery for handling aid at the Asian end was basically sounder under the United Nations. These are broad generalisations. We need to examine the specific ways in which experts suffered—or claim they suffered—at the hands of embassy and U.N. staff during their time overseas.

Particular Grievances

Briefing One of the things which upset experts was that on their arrival in the host country they had received from their sponsors little or no supplementary briefing on their duties, living conditions or the problems of adjusting to a new environment. This would not have mattered greatly had they been properly instructed beforehand, but we have already had occasion in Chapter 4 to criticise briefing arrangements in Australia. Since donor briefing in the host country was also discussed in that chapter, we shall confine ourselves here to three observations:

(i) Apropos of what was said earlier in the present chapter, unsatisfactory briefing at the Asian end points to one area in which donor staff rather tended to fall down in the job of observing and advising. They did not do enough, in other words, either to acquaint themselves at the pre-mission stage with details of assignment plans or to pass on what they had learned to experts on their arrival.

(ii) The conduct of some experts did not make the donor's task any easier. The grievance of one embassy spokesman, for example, was that experts too often failed to do their own homework properly before leaving Australia. What is more, he added, briefing after arrival presented real difficulties in the case of two classes of experts: those with little initiative who expected information to be spoon-fed to them, and the independent spirits who chose to go their own way and shunned embassy advice altogether.

(iii) A breakdown of the figures in Table 4 by sponsoring organisation suggests that Colombo Plan experts were no more unhappy than their U.N. colleagues with the quality of briefing received—perhaps a little less so. But Table 4 refers principally to what happened prior to arrival in the host country. Indeed, the admittedly slim evidence we have suggests that the opposite may well have been closer to the truth as far as on-the-spot briefing was concerned, the bulk of criticism having come from Colombo Plan experts.

Starting Arrangements A second grievance was that more should have been done by donor staff in the host country to ensure that all was in readiness for experts on their arrival—counterparts and other assistants

lined up, office space reserved, private accommodation secured, and so on. This of course was primarily a matter of pre-mission arrangements and as such has already been considered in Chapter 4.¹ But while on this subject, there are two things that ought to be mentioned. First, criticism of preparatory arrangements in the host country points to the same deficiencies in aid administration as criticism of briefing, namely that donor staff have not taken their watch-dog and advisory roles sufficiently seriously in the past. For although the actual organising of counterparts, office space and the like is the host country's responsibility, it is up to the donor to keep an eye on proceedings and where necessary to remind the host government of its commitments. Secondly, in this area of aid administration, too, Colombo Plan experts seem generally to have fared less successfully than those serving with the United Nations, if the complaints to come to our attention are any guide.

Liaison with Headquarters Turning now to problems extending beyond the initial settling-in period, in the course of our inquiries we met with a good deal of criticism of embassies in their capacity as intermediary between the expert and the authorities in Canberra. There were two major bones of contention. The first was that embassy staff were dilatory in forwarding experts' requests for advice or action to Canberra. Negotiating with the latter was often a frustratingly slow business, adding to the inconvenience and uncertainty of assignment execution. Canberra's tardy response was admittedly largely to blame, but according to some experts, delays were partly the embassy's fault. A further grievance was that the embassy was not always prepared to back experts in their approaches to Canberra on such matters as equipment, and had occasionally gone out of its way to ensure that nothing would come of their requests. While it is understandable that individuals should have felt thwarted when this happened, the embassy may of course have had valid grounds for taking the stand it did.

Having explained the nature of the problem, a number of experts then turned their attention to possible solutions. Curiously enough, two diametrically opposite courses of action were suggested. Some were in favour of giving embassies wider decision-making powers. It was claimed that as well as speeding up business, additional responsibility would put pressure on embassy staff to show more initiative and take a keener interest in assignment execution. In contrast, others we questioned were anxious to see embassy authority curtailed to give experts greater opportunity of dealing directly with Canberra. Embassy staff, they said, already

¹ There is also reference in Chapter 9 to preliminary arrangements on the housing side.

had enough to do; in any case, officials in Canberra were frequently the only ones in a position to answer their queries or follow up their recommendations.

This conflict of opinion, incidentally, probably stems in large measure from the diversity of individual experience, since the effectiveness of liaison with Canberra appears to have varied between countries and over time, depending on embassy personalities. One expert, for example, found that negotiating through the embassy with Canberra was much easier after a change of ambassador. And according to an External Affairs spokesman, it was fully recognised in Canberra that embassies were not equally active and prompt in dealing with aid matters.

Rather than take sides on this issue, let us merely say two things. First, aid administration at *both* the embassy and Canberra ends undoubtedly required strengthening in the 1950s and early 1960s: whether this would have increased or reduced the degree of autonomy enjoyed by embassy staff is of no more than secondary significance. The other point is that our thoughts in this area centre on the Colombo Plan for the simple reason that nearly all the critical comment we received was from persons under that scheme. U.N. experts seem to have been much less dissatisfied with the liaison job done by local representatives. For one thing, they appear to have had more opportunity of consulting directly with the headquarters staff responsible for making decisions or supplying information. Thus an air navigation instructor in the Philippines informed us that he used to channel all questions relating to his assignment to ICAO's world headquarters in Montreal without involving anybody locally. There is also evidence that U.N. liaison was superior in the sense that when experts' affairs needed referring to higher authority outside the host country, the forwarding process was generally speedier than under the Colombo Plan. Indeed, only two U.N. appointees took advantage of our questionnaire to lodge any sort of protest about poor liaison. One complained that his agency's senior representative in the country had been unco-operative; he had therefore by-passed this person and communicated directly with headquarters. The other, working in the same country and for the same U.N. agency, had difficulty obtaining permission to use certain facilities because of friction between the agency's branch and field offices.

Liaison with Host Government The embassy can and should be a valuable connecting link for the expert in his dealings not only with Canberra but with host country authorities as well. A major point of difference between these two links is that in the latter case, of course, the expert is himself in direct and continuous contact with the local administration and is therefore less obviously dependent on the good offices of the

embassy than in his relations with Canberra. When we say 'less obviously dependent', however, we do not mean that the individual is favourably placed to tackle the local administration on his own.

That this second connecting link is extremely important, even after the initial settling-in period, is clearly recognised by some donor nations of which the United States is the outstanding example. AID staff are in constant touch with the host country personnel in charge of any projects on which an American expert happens to be employed—feeding information to them, offering advice, negotiating on the expert's behalf, checking on the progress being made, providing office space and so forth. All parties stand to gain from this close association, a senior AID official in India assured us. The expert's task is simplified; the burden on the host country of supervising operations is lightened in terms of finance and effort; and AID has greater guarantee that aid money is being spent wisely.

As a small nation with comparatively few experts in the field—only a handful at any one time in some Asian countries—Australia can hardly be expected to offer supporting facilities on the American scale. There may in fact be certain disadvantages in trying to do so, as a second U.S. official admitted to us in private conversation. The sheer size of the AID organisation and the thoroughness of its operations have aroused a good deal of local resentment and suspicion—resentment at what is regarded as unwarranted intrusion by the United States into a country's domestic affairs, and suspicion of the motives behind this intrusion.

But these considerations are scarcely a convincing counter to the charge that Australian embassies in the past have offered next to nothing by way of supporting facilities, leaving experts to cope with the local administration as best they could. In the words of one Indian official we interviewed:

Colombo Plan experts often lack institutional backing, as the Australian authorities seem to be concerned with the expert only 'tangentially'—with his arrival and departure. This is a pity; for an expert's success and standing, although mainly determined by his qualifications and reputation, is nevertheless enhanced by the organisation standing behind him. The U.S. government and the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations appreciate this, and so also to a large extent do U.N. missions. But the Australian expert is expected to fend for himself.

This Indian was by no means the only Asian spokesman to express such views, and broadly similar comments were made as well by the members of staff of several other donor bodies we contacted. It is therefore a trifle puzzling that experts themselves should have given comparatively little attention to this issue in answering the questionnaire. (Admittedly, there was no specific reference to it on the questionnaire

form; but, after all, a good deal was said about liaison with Canberra without it being specifically mentioned either.) Of the eight individuals who did complain to us of the inadequacy of the link between embassy and host country, seven compared their own experience unfavourably with that of experts working for other donor organisations such as the United Nations and AID. What largely upset them, in other words, was the embassy's *relatively* poorer showing. Perhaps one reason then for the absence of criticism is that experts did not always know about the close ties existing between other donor bodies and the local administration. It is extremely unlikely, however, that so many experts would have refrained from comment because of such ignorance if they had not been at least tolerably satisfied with the embassy's role. This suggests that a possibly more important reason for lack of criticism is that Colombo Plan experts did not have to make as much use as other experts of the donor-host country link because, for example, their projects were generally on a less ambitious scale. But whatever the explanation, it should be stressed that we are concerned at this point only with the period of assignment execution. Inadequate liaison between embassy and host country before and after an expert's term of appointment was undoubtedly a worrying problem, as we have endeavoured to indicate elsewhere in this report.

AID was one of the donor organisations cited approvingly by those criticising Australia's relative efforts. This is perhaps an opportune moment therefore to mention two other points about American aid that were brought to our attention. First, in discussing the factors affecting the outcome of their missions, several persons described having made considerable use of AID facilities for advice and information. An engineer in Vietnam in the late 1950s, when American aid there was already substantial, laid considerable stress on this. He then proceeded to suggest that the Australian government should actively seek to promote more inter-agency co-operation in view of its own limited resources and small complement of experts. Secondly, however, AID's firmly entrenched position in the host country was listed by one or two individuals among the obstacles impeding assignment execution. The most outspoken critic was not a Colombo Plan expert but an educationalist serving with a UNESCO team. 'The strength and single-mindedness of the U.S. Agency', he complained, 'were a very real hindrance to the standing and effectiveness of the UNESCO mission.' The Americans were in much closer touch with the Ministry of Education and had advisers in every main field in which there was an UNESCO appointee. Thus whenever U.S. and UNESCO thinking differed on policy matters, which was not infrequently, the former almost invariably carried the day with the local authorities.

Isolation We come now to the final grievance. Living and working

in unaccustomed surroundings and among strangers, an expert can hardly avoid experiencing a sense of isolation. As he becomes increasingly familiar with his environment this of course should tend to disappear. Even so, our inquiries turned up a surprising number of individuals who admitted being conscious of a sense of isolation throughout their entire stay. And the significant point is that they were not primarily referring to physical separation from family and friends—although this no doubt was in their minds to some extent—but rather to the aloofness of donor staff which made them feel remote and cut off in their work. While this criticism is not unconnected with several of the points already dealt with, particularly lack of on-the-spot briefing, it warrants special attention in view of one or two important things about isolation not so far mentioned.

First, an embassy's contribution to assignment success by way of advice, information and practical assistance cannot be judged solely in terms of its direct and tangible impact: its effects on the morale of the expert also need to be borne in mind. Even though Australian experts have the reputation for being easy-going and self-reliant, it is apparent from their comments that many of them were more than a little put out by the embassy's stand-offish attitude. 'It was something of an emotional let-down', one individual said, 'to find that your sponsors were not solidly behind you, after having been led to believe at the time of recruitment that you were going to do a worthwhile job on their behalf.' There is no obvious way of telling how far the capacity of experts to carry out their work efficiently may have suffered through their being subjected to psychological stress of this kind. We know of a few instances where such stress probably does help to explain why a particular person retired into his shell after taking up duties and made no serious attempt to apply himself to his job; but in each case there were other contributing causes as well—lack of local interest, for example. And several individuals told us that, while they had not allowed the emotional strain to impair their judgment and drive, it had been enough to deter them from agreeing to extend their stay or from applying later for other technical assistance posts.

Secondly, the embassy's failure to supply them fully and promptly with the information, advice and practical assistance they sought was not the only disheartening feature of donor support that experts complained about. Two other factors were mentioned by some as having heightened their sense of isolation. The first was that rarely if ever had they received a friendly word or gesture of encouragement to make them feel that, even though the embassy might not be in a position to give them as much positive help as they would have liked, it was at least appreciative of what they were doing. This indifference, most of them suggested, arose from the fact that embassy personnel were not sufficiently well informed about

technical assistance or sufficiently sympathetic to it to take a sustained interest in experts and their work. But several experts had a slightly different explanation. They thought the basic problem was that embassies were staffed by diplomats, and that calculated aloofness was part and parcel of the diplomatic profession's *modus operandi*.

The second of these other isolating factors was concerned with what may be described as the limited scope for effective dialogue. Experts sometimes complained that they were not in close enough rapport with the donor authorities to feel able to use the embassy as a sounding-board for their ideas or as a body they could turn to for a constructive discussion of their problems. It had become increasingly apparent during their period of stay that the embassy was not qualified to be a party to this form of dialogue, and they had tended to react to this by becoming less frank and communicative themselves. Several of them admitted, for instance, that their periodical reports to the embassy had initially been fairly lengthy and down-to-earth documents, but as this evoked little response from those to whom the reports were addressed at the embassy and in Canberra, they had subsequently confined their submissions to brief, formal statements of a factual nature.

This brings us to a final aspect of the isolation problem, namely contact between different experts. Such contact, especially between those working in broadly similar fields, permits ideas to be exchanged, grievances aired and mutual encouragement given. It thus helps to compensate in some measure for the embassy's own failings. Ironically, however, one of the factors restricting the opportunities for such compensation has been embassy policy itself: surprisingly little seems to have been done in the past to bring experts together formally or informally for the purpose of comparing notes. In this, as in other respects, the local U.N. authorities have generally shown more initiative. The normal U.N. practice has been to hold regular monthly meetings to which all experts were invited. 'These meetings', a UNESCO adviser in the Philippines informed us, 'were a great help both from the social point of view and in getting to know more about the efforts, problems and possibilities in the host country.'

Yet it is doubtful whether this is the chief reason why some experts have had more success than others in establishing close contact with fellow experts. Probably more important is that some were employed on one-man missions where the scope for meeting fellow experts in a professional capacity was limited, while others were attached to a team and therefore had colleagues working alongside to whom they could turn for advice and moral support. And in the case of team membership, there are also several further distinctions to be reckoned with:

- (i) Whether or not the expert was team leader. If in charge of a team,

especially a large one, he may have found himself cut off to some extent from his associates and had a correspondingly greater sense of isolation. Moreover, as head of mission, he is likely to have had most to do with the donor authorities and thus been the person most affected by any lack of support on their part. This is reflected in the replies to our questionnaire: some of the lengthiest and most critical comments on donor performance were from team leaders.

(ii) Whether or not the expert was a foundation member of the mission. For if he joined a team already operational, he may have found it easier settling in. There is less likelihood that preparations for his arrival would have been neglected; and he was probably able to make use of his colleagues for on-the-spot briefing.

(iii) Whether or not the expert was attached to an all-Australian or multi-national team. There are varying opinions regarding the respective merit of these alternatives. We have heard it said by some, including a number of Asian officials, that the multi-national team is preferable. By enabling the host country to draw on the expertise of persons with diverse technical and cultural backgrounds, it makes for greater flexibility in the tackling of problems; for the expert, too, the experience of working with non-Australians is both stimulating and instructive. From other quarters, however, we have been told exactly the opposite. The multi-national team, according to its critics, leads to inconsistency and compromise which must inevitably be detrimental to project efficiency; personal relations are also liable to be more strained where differences in national temperament are involved. These conflicting judgments no doubt reflect personal experience which varies from mission to mission. This is certainly true of the personality factor: non-Australian colleagues have in some cases been easy to get on with and in other cases difficult. (Nevertheless, the fact that we received almost no complaints on this score from members of purely Australian teams suggests that differences in national temperament can be a cause of friction.) But more important, circumstances vary according to the nature of the mission. In fields such as education, broadcasting and agricultural research, for example, it may be desirable at the initial planning stage to have experts with a common outlook and background to work out guidelines for action. There are obvious disadvantages in bringing together individuals with widely differing ideas to advise a host government on, say, technical education reform when the local authorities themselves are not really in a position to judge the appropriateness of the conflicting proposals put to them.² However, when the team's task is

² Several teachers who drew our attention to this problem admitted that working with fellow Australians could create similar difficulties owing to basic differences in the systems of education in the various Australian States.

to implement rather than to formulate plans—staffing an existing training institute, for instance—it is likely to matter much less whether members of the team are of one or several nationalities. They will be subject to certain constraints imposed by the local director and will have to accommodate themselves to his policies. Indeed, this is the sort of situation in which, in the words of one Australian we interviewed, ‘a multi-national partnership can prove a particularly rewarding experience for consultants, counterparts and trainees alike’.

Two things must be borne in mind in conjunction with what has just been said. The first is that Colombo Plan missions have in the past been predominantly one-man rather than team efforts. Only 24 per cent of Colombo Plan experts who answered our questionnaire belonged to a team, compared with a U.N. figure of 56 per cent. And secondly, when Colombo Plan activities have been on a team basis they have generally been wholly Australian affairs, whereas the U.N. team of course has almost invariably consisted of people drawn from several nations.

HEADQUARTERS STAFF

Approximately two-thirds of the comments we received from Colombo Plan experts in connection with donor support at the mission stage were directed at the embassy rather than at Canberra, which is not really surprising, bearing in mind that experts’ immediate dealings were with the embassy and that they were in a position to observe the behaviour of embassy staff at close quarters. This does not mean, however, that the authorities in Canberra escaped criticism altogether. Far from it.

A complaint similar to the one levelled at embassies was that Canberra had given the expert little indication that the progress of his assignment was being followed with interest. What upset some was the lack of any acknowledgment that the periodical reports they sent to the embassy for forwarding to Australia had reached their ultimate destination—let alone been read and acted upon.³ Another disheartening thing was that at no stage had Canberra communicated with the expert simply to inquire how he was making out or as a friendly gesture of encouragement. When he had been contacted, it had invariably been in response to some query he himself had raised. Furthermore, such contact as there was had been by correspondence: unlike his U.N. colleagues, he had seldom if ever been visited by aid officials from headquarters. The significant effect that

³ The comments in Chapter 10 on the Australian authorities’ failure to study terminal reports carefully and take necessary follow-up action are also of considerable relevance in the present context.

personal contact may sometimes have on morale was brought home to us by the comments of an Australian in Sabah in the mid-1950s. When the Minister for External Affairs, Mr (now Lord) Casey visited the country, he made a point of getting in touch with this expert and learning at first hand how his mission was proceeding and what suggestions and complaints he had. This incident, together with the call another Australian Minister paid on him, obviously impressed the expert tremendously. Because of this visit, he said, 'I always had the knowledge that the Australian Government responsible for the Colombo Plan were genuinely interested in the work that their experts were doing.'

A related grievance was that officials in Canberra were too far removed from the scene of operations to be capable of handling some of the problems forwarded to them in the course of assignment execution. (In so far as the aid administrators in Australia were guided by the advice of embassy staff on the spot, the force of such criticism is of course weakened.) We should add that a number of U.N. experts made the same point. A UNESCO adviser in Indonesia complained that one of the most frustrating aspects of his mission had been 'control from a distance'. UNESCO headquarters in Paris at times had insisted on making decisions on matters requiring a direct knowledge of the local situation.

But if the comments we received are a reliable guide, far and away the most disheartening feature of experts' relations with Canberra was the latter's tardiness in attending to their needs. It was not unusual, for example, to be kept waiting months for letters to be answered—if they were replied to at all. Thus one person had this to say about his correspondence with Canberra: 'The subjects covered ranged from personal matters concerning leave, housing, etc. to requests for more materials and equipment for the project. A large proportion of this correspondence was never answered, while correspondence fortunate enough to elicit some attention often waited six to twelve months for an answer. This meant that quite a lot of the adviser's time was involved in paper work which would not have been necessary under ordinary circumstances.'

The most serious delays—most serious from the point of view of both their length and disruptive effects—were in meeting requests for materials and equipment. This is such an important issue and one so many experts raised that we propose devoting the remainder of the chapter to spelling out our findings.

Equipment Delays

About fifty experts, or 20 per cent of those who completed the questionnaire, saw fit to draw our attention to delays in receiving capital from Australia. The circumstances naturally varied. Sometimes the materials

and equipment referred to were technical assistance items such as teaching aids, and at other times capital for development programs; sometimes the ordering had been done by a predecessor or by the expert in question prior to leaving Australia, and at other times by the latter individual at an earlier stage in his assignment; sometimes the lag was a matter of a few weeks or months, and at other times anything up to two or three years. But whatever the particular circumstances, equipment delays were undoubtedly a worrying factor for quite a number of experts in the field.

These delays, in addition to holding up technical assistance operations in more obvious and direct ways, created the following problems:

(i) They made it more difficult for experts to establish and maintain local goodwill, especially where previous assurances had been given that equipment would be arriving promptly. According to several individuals, not only had their own reputation suffered, but Australia's good name as well.

(ii) Long delivery lags occasionally meant that equipment was outdated by the time it reached the host country.

(iii) We were told by an expert in Indonesia that, owing to the rapidity of local inflation, a 30-month delay in obtaining machinery from Australia had meant an enormous increase in installation costs and this in turn had created all sorts of difficulties.

(iv) One disconcerting aspect of delay was the tendency for equipment to be delivered in piecemeal fashion, with items turning up perhaps months apart. This was not only extremely frustrating; there was also the extra work entailed in arranging for the storage and maintenance of idle equipment pending further deliveries, and in checking that nothing had been mislaid in transit.

Why the delays? The answer must be sought in a combination of factors, the first in chronological order being the dilatory manner in which embassies have sometimes forwarded requests for equipment to Canberra, a matter referred to earlier. A second factor was the length of time taken to process these requests in Canberra before reaching a decision. Among the reasons for this were:

(i) The aid section, at least until fairly recently was grossly understaffed, which was hardly conducive to speedy decision making.

(ii) An important feature of Australian aid policy is the condition laid down by the Commonwealth government that any equipment donated to developing nations must be at least two-thirds Australian in factor content. This rule was already in force in the period under review and one of its effects was to slow down the initial processing of requests. When foreign-made equipment was specified, it took time to find out whether

there were Australian-made equivalents and whether these would be acceptable to the expert concerned.

(iii) The aid section, being part of a government department, is bound by various financial rules laid down by the Treasury—rules capable of causing a certain amount of delay. Requests for equipment lodged towards the end of the financial year, for example, are likely to be held over until the new year, as the current year's fund allocation will probably be fully committed already. The point here is that unused balances cannot be carried forward and it is therefore unwise to leave expenditure decisions until the last couple of months of the year. Greater financial flexibility would, we believe, make a useful contribution to speedier decision-making.

(iv) While experts may not always have set out their equipment needs sufficiently precisely, one cannot help feeling that unnecessary officialdom on Canberra's part probably contributed to the delay. This can be illustrated by citing the experience of an Australian in a former French territory. This person, although a UNESCO rather than a Colombo Plan adviser, was approached by the embassy which offered to send him a number of hand-tools. It was suggested that he prepare his official list of requirements in French since the formal request for the aid had to come from the French-speaking host government. At the same time, however, the embassy asked him for his original English list—the basis of the French translation—to assist the authorities in Canberra. To continue the story in his own words:

To my bewilderment, for months a correspondence went on between me and Canberra where somebody queried the correctness of my translation into French of the technical terms relating to a long list of tools, although I had headed the list with a statement that the English list was the one which should be followed in purchasing the goods. During the following six months until the end of my mission, I did not see one chisel or a single nail and from personal letters I know it was almost a year after I left before the material arrived.

It is worth adding that this same expert also had dealings with other bilateral foreign aid missions, including the Americans, French and British, and found co-operation excellent. Only the Australians were criticised for being 'over bureaucratic'.

The third stage in proceedings, and a third potential source of delay, has to do with arranging for procurement. Once a request for equipment is approved in principle by Canberra, the External Aid Procurement Directorate then takes over. This body, attached to External Affairs and located in Melbourne, does not deal directly with suppliers but works through the Department of Supply in much the same way as the Colombo Plan and U.N. authorities use the Department of Labour and National

Service to handle the actual recruitment of experts.⁴

While the process of selecting the firms to supply equipment was not always as speedy as the experts answering our questionnaire would have wished, neither the Directorate nor the Supply Department was to blame for this except perhaps to a limited degree. Delays at this point mainly stemmed from two constraints under which these bodies had to operate. The first was the requirement that public tenders must be called before contracts were let, a time-consuming practice in spite of certain advantages. But much more important was the Australian-content rule already referred to. Adherence to this rule sometimes meant that requests for capital were knocked back altogether. This happened to a radiographer in Burma, for example. His application for X-ray equipment was rejected because, although the Australian product was perfectly satisfactory, it contained too many imported parts to qualify. He was similarly unable to secure a number of books he wanted because they were overseas publications. But even when requests were approved, the items of capital sought were at times of rather specialised character not normally available in this country. And it is here that delays frequently occurred while the authorities searched for firms able and willing to produce prototype equipment or to modify standard lines.

Although the local-content requirement may, with Treasury approval, be waived in exceptional circumstances, it has undoubtedly been a source of frustration and embarrassment for some experts as well as a sore point with host governments. The aid authorities in Canberra, we understand, intend ensuring that at future briefing sessions experts are made fully aware of the position and encouraged to think in terms of Australian goods. They are reluctant, however, to advocate relaxing a rule obviously favoured by Commonwealth departments such as Treasury and Trade. Personally we should like to see some modification. Perhaps as a first step, individual or composite items of equipment valued at less than, say, \$A3,000 might be exempted from the existing requirement. The effect of this would be to continue to subject the bulk of capital aid to the local-content rule as it stands, while at the same time enabling much of the ancillary equipment connected with technical assistance to be obtained from the most readily available and cheapest source.

The demand for non-standardised equipment was largely responsible for delays at the next stage—the production process itself. Tailor-made items, especially sizeable and complex pieces of machinery, sometimes took many months to manufacture. A printing press asked for by a team

⁴ The United Nations also makes use of the Department of Supply when acquiring equipment in Australia.

in Djakarta was over two years in arriving. Other delaying factors were admittedly present in this instance; nevertheless constructing the press was a lengthy business, mainly because the machine was not the kind of thing ordinarily produced in Australia and had to be specially made.

When all these obstacles have been surmounted, one final step still remains. Arrangements must be made to transport the equipment to the host country and clear it through customs, the latter job falling to the embassy. This can involve further delays, particularly if shipping is slow and irregular.

There are several matters we should like to mention briefly in conclusion. In the first place, although criticism of donor support on the equipment side was levelled chiefly at delivery delays, a few experts were not completely happy with the quality of the 'hardware' they received. This point was raised too infrequently, however, to warrant introducing the subject but for its apparent link in two ways with delivery delays: (a) As we have already seen, these delays sometimes meant that equipment was outdated by the time it reached its destination. (b) Several experts inferred from their own experience that procurement difficulties stemming from the Australian-content rule had led the authorities to commission work from firms not properly qualified for the job.

Secondly, a means successfully adopted by some experts to speed up deliveries was to make representation through the firms they worked for in Australia. There was the case of an engineer in Vietnam who was anxious to obtain a piece of equipment which he knew his employers in Victoria could readily secure. What he did was to notify them of his requirements while at the same time making formal application through the embassy. His employers had immediately got in touch with Canberra, and this he believed was largely responsible for the equipment arriving reasonably promptly.

Thirdly, where production delays were unavoidable, as they often must have been with large and complex types of machinery, missions could have been timed better in relation to the supply of equipment. An illustration of this is the case of an engineer sent to Indonesia to supervise the installation of highly intricate equipment from Australia, equipment which did not begin to arrive until two years later, when the engineer was on the point of returning to Australia. His mission was certainly not a waste of time as there was a good deal of preliminary work to be done. But in retrospect it might have been more sensible to postpone his assignment for at least a year.

In the fourth place, when apportioning blame for delays we must not overlook the part played by host governments in arranging for Australian equipment. Strictly speaking all requests had to come from host govern-

ments. And even though this practice was not always fully adhered to with smallish items, there can be no doubt that some of the delays at both the embassy and Canberra ends—particularly the former—were the result of indecisiveness and procrastination on the part of host governments in giving their approval.

Fifthly, having dealt at length with equipment delays, we should be less than fair if we did not mention that a few experts went out of their way to praise the Australian authorities for their promptness in supplying the capital asked for. Thus a medical technician in Sabah told us that he lodged repeated requests for laboratory apparatus during his 3-year mission and always got what he wanted quickly, often by air freight.

Finally, we have refrained from commenting on the experience of U.N. experts covered by our questionnaire since they rarely received much equipment directly from their own agency. The practice under the United Nations, then as now, was to satisfy equipment needs mainly from local counterpart funds and from the gifts of bilateral aid-giving organisations (often in the form of non-convertible government contributions to U.N. aid programs). Moreover, such capital items as U.N. experts secured were predominantly ancillary aids; in contrast, many Colombo Plan experts were associated with projects involving Australian capital of a developmental character, and their complaints to us often had to do with this type of capital.

Duration of Appointment

THE EVIDENCE

The duration of assignments has tended to vary markedly, from only a few weeks in some instances to over nine years in the case of a printing instructor and team leader in Indonesia. No particular duration can fairly be described as typical: 26 per cent of those who responded to our questionnaire served for under 3 months, 26 per cent for 3-11 months, 22 per cent for 12-23 months, and 26 per cent for longer periods.

These differences are one manifestation of the diverse nature of assignments themselves. Thus very brief missions of less than three months have mostly been of the fact-finding or medical-teaching varieties. By fact-finding missions we mean those where the expert investigates and reports on a specific problem, such as the feasibility of making artificial limbs in the Philippines, the efficiency of fire-fighting services in Singapore's Department of Civil Aviation, or the possibility of establishing a natural history museum in Thailand—all actual examples from our files. Missions of this type have not infrequently been concerned with the prior evaluation of more ambitious aid projects.

Medical-teaching missions refer to lecture courses, demonstrations and examinations conducted by members of the medical profession. Singapore has attracted a sizeable proportion of such missions: since 1957 Singapore's medical school has been visited by about fifty doctors to lecture and examine candidates seeking to qualify as Fellows of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons; and since 1963 at least another thirty doctors have lectured there on behalf of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians.¹ Characteristically, medical teaching as well as fact-finding work tends to be limited in scope, precise in aim, and rarely involves the training of counterparts—factors helping to explain the restricted period of appointment.

Missions lasting longer than three months are a much more mixed

¹ These are overall figures to the end of 1967. There were fifteen such doctors in our survey.

bag and cannot be so readily identified with one or two particular types of projects. That there nevertheless is some connecting link between the nature and duration of such missions is apparent from Tables 10 and 11, based on questionnaire data.

TABLE 10
Nature of Work and Duration of Assignment

Nature of work	Size of sample*	Duration of assignment				Total
		Under 3 months	3-11 months	12-23 months	24 months and over	
	No.	%	%	%	%	%
Training	127	14	22	28	36	100
Administration	43	5	21	30	44	100
Consulting	120	30	29	20	21	100
Research	45	11	38	20	31	100
Own occupation	104	28	21	26	25	100

* The figures in this column total considerably more than 231—the number of experts supplying the data for this table—because many experts recorded the nature of their work under more than one heading.

The kinds of tasks performed by experts—training, administration, consulting, research, and working in own occupation—are compared in Table 10 with length of assignment. While it would be wrong to attach much weight to the detailed figures in the table, since experts have not always interpreted ‘training’, ‘consulting’ and so forth in similar fashion, in broad outline what certainly emerges is that training and administration have usually been identified with longer assignments—as the nature of such activities would lead one to predict. Consulting, on the other hand, has tended to be associated with assignments of less than a year. (By way of partial explanation, fact-finding missions are mostly included here or under ‘own occupation’.) Research, understandably, has not often been for a period as short as one or two months.

In Table 11 assignments of varying length are classified according to field of operation, using the major divisions employed by the now superseded U.N. Technical Assistance Board in its annual reports. In some fields such as community development, the numbers involved are too slight to comment on, and in others such as the development of public utilities, the spread of assignments is fairly regular. But in the two major areas of health services and education, distinctive and interesting time-patterns emerge. Health services have tended to be dominated by short

assignments, half of them being for less than three months; at the same time, however, and largely because of drawn-out nursing appointments, lengthy assignments have been more numerous than ones in the middle range. With education the picture is quite different: there have been very few short assignments, and over two-thirds have lasted for a year or more.

For reasons largely connected with the nature of the expert's work and his field of operation—although other factors are obviously relevant as well—the duration of missions has shown some tendency to vary with the sponsoring organisation and starting date.²

TABLE 11
Field of Operation and Duration of Assignment

Field of operation	Size of sample	Duration of assignment				Total
		Under 3 months	3-11 months	12-23 months	24 months and over	
	No.	%	%	%	%	%
Formulation of development plans, surveys of resources, etc.	31	19	29	23	29	100
Development of public utilities — power, transport & communications	29	28	21	24	27	100
Industrial production	13	15	31	31	23	100
Agricultural production	38	21	47	16	16	100
Auxiliary services to agriculture and industry	12	8	17	0	75	100
Health services	55	51	11	16	22	100
Education	44	14	18	39	29	100
Community development	3	33	67	0	0	100
Other social services	7	14	72	0	14	100
Total	232	26	26	22	26	100

Sponsoring Organisation Colombo Plan missions have been noticeably shorter than U.N. missions, according to Table 12. The most striking aspect of this has been the Colombo Plan's much heavier concentration on projects of under three months, which is closely related to the fact that medical-teaching and fact-finding assignments have been mainly sponsored by the Australian government. A great many U.N. experts have been appointed for one year, and this is reflected in the disproportionate number of U.N. assignments in the 12-23 month range. There have also been wide

² The time-pattern also varies geographically. Of the assignments covered by our sample, over two-thirds in the case of India, the Philippines and Singapore, but under one-third in the case of Malaysia and Indonesia, were for less than a year.

differences between individual U.N. agencies. UNESCO, for example, is the only agency where assignments of under three months have been of any importance; FAO has undertaken a disproportionate number of 3-11 month missions; ICAO and ILO have employed experts only for a year or longer. These conclusions, however, are based on a fairly small sample, and for this reason figures for the individual U.N. agencies are not given separately in Table 12.

TABLE 12
Sponsoring Organisation and Duration of Assignment

Sponsoring organisation	Size of sample	Duration of assignment				Total
		Under 3 months	3-11 months	12-23 months	24 months and over	
	No.	%	%	%	%	%
Colombo Plan	165	33	27	16	24	100
United Nations	67	11	22	34	33	100
Total	232	26	26	22	26	100

Starting Date From the evidence of Table 13 and other information to hand, it appears that the average duration of assignments has fallen quite appreciably over the years. But the change has certainly not been as great as the figures in Table 13 suggest. For one thing, only the most recent assignment of experts who responded to the questionnaire has been taken into account, and it must be borne in mind that the earlier assign-

TABLE 13
Starting Date and Duration of Assignment

Starting date of assignment	Size of sample	Duration of assignment				Total
		Under 3 months	3-11 months	12-23 months	24 months and over	
	No.	%	%	%	%	%
1954-9	114	16	21	28	35	100
1960-4	118	36	31	15	18	100
Total	232	26	26	22	26	100

ments of those completing several missions have usually been rather short and were mostly before 1960. For another thing, the number of long assignments since the 1950s has been kept down by the limited opportunity of both starting and finishing a lengthy mission between 1960 and 1964, only completed assignments being recorded in Table 13. On the other

hand, the figures have not apparently been distorted by possible differences in the rate of response to the questionnaire. The response was much the same for experts who started their assignments in the 1950s as for those starting later, and also much the same for those on short assignments as for those on long.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The amount of time an expert requires to do his job properly depends on various things, the nature of the work and the field of the project merely being two of the more important considerations. It is therefore almost impossible to generalise about optimum length or to say how far on average experts have been given too much or too little time to carry out their missions.

However, we do have figures comparing duration of assignment with the expert's own assessment of success and these are set out in Table 14. There are not enough 'failures' to be worth discussing, but the breakdown between 'most successful' and 'moderately successful' suggests that

TABLE 14
Duration and Success of Assignment

Duration of assignment	Size of sample	Degree of assignment success*			Total
		Most successful	Moderately successful	Failure	
	No.	%	%	%	%
Under 3 months	57	65	33	2	100
3-11 months	56	52	45	3	100
12-23 months	49	27	71	2	100
24 months and over	57	37	60	3	100
Total	219	46	51	3	100

* Up to time of expert's return to Australia.

missions of under a year—noticeably those of under three months—have been more successful than longer missions. Unfortunately this sort of information really tells us very little about whether assignments as a whole or those of a certain type have tended to be too brief or too long, having regard to what they were designed to achieve. The fact that the shortest assignments have apparently been a good deal more successful than those of a year and upwards does not necessarily mean that the former have

been closer to the right length than the latter. As already pointed out, short missions of the fact-finding and medical varieties have usually been straightforward affairs of limited scope, and it is thus scarcely surprising that the experts undertaking them should in the main have regarded their efforts as highly successful. Longer assignments, in contrast, have generally been more complex and demanding and therefore in their very nature more prone to failure.

Similarly, the fact that short missions have been judged more successful than long ones by the participants cannot be taken to signify that short assignments are of greater merit or that they ought to be encouraged at the expense of lengthier assignments. Indeed, to the extent that counter-part training and institution-building are the kinds of technical assistance that really matter, longer-term missions are unquestionably of greater importance.

An interesting feature of Table 14 is that extremely long missions appear to have been more successful than those of 12-23 months. Differences in the nature of work or field of activity may be part of the explanation although this appears to run counter to what has just been said about lengthier assignments being more complex and demanding. It is also possible that those serving a long while are especially reluctant to admit that their missions have not been completely successful. But the figures in the table may also indicate that rather too many assignments in the 12-23 month bracket have been undesirably brief and would have produced better results if they had been extended.

This last possibility cannot be lightly dismissed, since it tends to bear out a number of things experts told us about their missions. Some individuals admitted they would have done better had they stayed longer, and it was largely those whose missions were of medium length who claimed this. One thing they emphasised was the considerable time it had taken to settle down, build up contacts, and acquaint themselves fully with the problems they would have to face and with the best ways of solving them. Some of these problems have been of a technical character. An engineer in Vietnam, for example, drew attention to the fact that the irrigation and water-supply design work around which his mission revolved required a fairly thorough background knowledge of the topography and climate of the country and of its agricultural and construction methods. In his opinion this had warranted at least a 2-year mission—four months longer than his actual term of appointment. But the problems have not always been technical ones; sometimes they have had to do with attitude of mind. As a teacher in Thailand has put it: 'For fundamental work, requiring not just physical and organisational changes but changes in deep-rooted ideas and long-established attitudes, one year is barely long enough

for a good person to begin to realise what he should *not* attempt to do and what methods he should *not* try to use. Three years would be little enough for the really good person.'

A second point was raised by some of those who complained of their missions being too short. Just as experts have often needed plenty of time to become properly acquainted with local problems and adapt themselves to their environment, so too they have frequently found that the task of getting their own ideas across to their counterparts and other local people, and of ensuring that these ideas take root, has been an unexpectedly protracted process. Because of this, several of the experts contacted favoured the idea of a minimum period of, say, two years for all assignments in which counterpart training or other kinds of instruction are a major consideration. A related suggestion was also made to the effect that, where for some reason an expert is unable to stay for a full two years, steps should at least be taken to ensure that a successor is appointed and that he is waiting to take over as soon as the first expert leaves. Thus a teacher in Cambodia regarded his own appointment for only one year as inevitably detrimental to his effectiveness but thought the harm done would not have been as great had he been succeeded immediately by another teacher carrying on with the same group of pupils. As it was his Australian replacement did not arrive until four months after his departure.

Complaints of this kind lead one to ask why unduly short assignments are allowed in the first place. There seem to be two main reasons. For one thing, the period of appointment has not always been carefully and realistically examined when the job description was being prepared. There has in particular been a tendency to underestimate the time an expert needs to settle in, and to make insufficient allowance for the many and varied obstacles likely to impede his progress.

However, the harmful repercussions of poor planning at the job description stage must not be exaggerated. Although many appointments have in the first instance been rather too short perhaps, an extension of time has frequently been granted.³ Experts have in fact rarely complained of the donor or recipient authorities turning down reasonable requests for extensions of time. If anything, indeed, the authorities have probably been too generous in approving extra time. In particular, they have not always been as firm as they might in refusing extensions in cases where progress so far has been unsatisfactory and there was nothing to suggest that things were going to improve. Understandably, experts have been somewhat

³ Canberra's policy was, and still is, to avoid wherever possible entering into very long-term commitments on the theory that resources should be committed only when the initial effort has proved the need for them. It prefers 12-month assignments with the possibility of a 12-month extension to outright 2-year appointments.

reluctant to recognise this. Some of them have acknowledged that a longer appointment would have been unwise, as it was desirable that the locals stand on their own feet and assume full responsibility as quickly as possible. But none has gone so far as to admit that he outstayed his usefulness or that his term of appointment was needlessly extended. Our impression that these things have occasionally happened is based on an examination of particular projects and on conversations we have had with other people—including fellow-consultants—about individual experts and their work.

The expert's inability or unwillingness to remain has been a second and more important reason for assignments being too short. An individual has sometimes found himself in the position where the host country has wanted him to stay longer and the donor authorities have been willing to extend his appointment, but he has had to decline because of his inability to obtain further leave of absence from his job in Australia. The aforementioned engineer in Vietnam, for example, was initially appointed for one year and this was subsequently extended by six months without too much trouble. But as time went by he came to realise that a further extension would be necessary to complete his assignment properly. The Vietnamese thought so too, for they supported his application for an additional six months. The Australian government was also prepared to co-operate but his employers—a State government instrumentality—wanted him back and rejected his request, although in the end he was given permission to stay for an extra two months, making twenty months in all. Because he was not allowed to remain for a full two years and therefore did not have time to tie up a number of loose ends, the mission in his opinion was not as effective as it might have been. Moreover, his failure to obtain the full extension was bad publicity for Australia. His Vietnamese colleagues who had wanted him to remain longer were aware that it was at the Australian end that his application had been rejected, and they interpreted this to signify that when it actually came to the point Australia was not prepared to back words with deeds in the field of foreign aid. This reaction may have been a little unfair but is the kind of thing that can easily happen.

This is not an isolated case. Others have had similar experiences, although in some instances it has been the expert himself who for business or personal reasons has declined to stay longer. A consideration worth bearing in mind on the personal side, for example, is that the shorter the assignment the less the likelihood of being accompanied by wife and family. Whereas four-fifths of questionnaire respondents who served for two years or more had their wives with them, the proportion in the 12-23 month range was only two-thirds, and in the 3-11 month range, one-third.

Some of the experts on medium-term appointments might thus have been prepared to continue had it not meant further separation from wife and family. Family matters, however, are dealt with more fully in the next chapter.

When assignments have been unduly short for the first of the two reasons discussed above—inadequate planning—more should have been done when the projects were being formulated to ensure that job descriptions were accurate. But in many instances it would have been wellnigh impossible, even with careful planning, to judge time requirements accurately beforehand. We are therefore not suggesting that the flexibility afforded by the renewal and extension of appointments should be entirely abandoned. Admittedly, an element of flexibility would obtain if, say, the first three months of all assignments initially scheduled to last more than a year were to be treated officially as a trial period, with both the expert and the host authorities having the right to terminate proceedings at the end of this time if for some reason things were not working our satisfactorily. This idea has been put forward by a number of experts, mainly in conjunction with the suggestion referred to earlier of a minimum period of perhaps two years for certain types of assignments. A minimum period by itself—especially of as much as two years—could lead to the undesirable prolonging of certain assignments which are making such poor progress that they really should be wound up as quickly as possible. A trial period would at least help to ensure balance between necessary and unnecessary extensions. One of several possible drawbacks to such an arrangement, however, is that most countries might not take experts and their missions sufficiently seriously during the trial period.

If the optimum duration of assignments could be worked out more accurately in advance and job descriptions tailored accordingly, the second reason for unduly short assignments would then become less important, since employment contracts would not have to be renewed or extended so frequently later on. But the problem would not disappear entirely. For one thing, there will always be some missions which, for reasons that could not have been foreseen, turn out to be too short and require lengthening. For another, making the initial duration of appointments longer would undoubtedly add to the already considerable difficulties associated with the recruitment of experts. The countries receiving aid would feel obliged to understate time requirements so as not to discourage applicants, hoping that once the experts were on the job they would be prepared to remain longer if necessary—which would introduce a situation not greatly different from the past. The solution must be sought in a more active recruiting policy in Australia, particularly in the field of longer-term appointments—a subject examined earlier.

Domestic Life

Some of the most challenging problems confronting the expert during his period of Asian residence arise from the unfamiliarity of his environment. This has already been alluded to in earlier chapters, but almost entirely with reference to various aspects of his job—the kinds of tasks performed, the structure of authority, local attitudes to work and so on. But an expert's life has its domestic side as well, and the environment in which his off-duty hours are spent will also be rather different from that in Australia. While his capacity to cope with domestic issues is unlikely to have as direct a bearing on the outcome of his mission as his capacity to cope with the actual work itself, it must not be ignored altogether. For one thing, unsatisfactory domestic arrangements can impede assignment execution: the expert's health may be adversely affected by the change in living conditions or valuable time lost during the crucial first weeks looking for suitable accommodation. The social side of domestic life, moreover, can sometimes positively assist the expert in his job by giving him a better opportunity of becoming personally acquainted with local colleagues and of widening his circle of contacts.

We therefore propose to devote an entire chapter to issues of a domestic character, dealing with living conditions and social life in turn, and concluding with some brief comments on the question of wives accompanying their husbands overseas.

LIVING CONDITIONS

Some three-fifths of all experts completing the questionnaire referred to living conditions in the course of evaluating their experiences. Of this number, 63 per cent described the conditions they lived under as good, 27 per cent as fair, and 10 per cent as poor. These figures present a reasonably favourable picture, although the position varies a good deal from country to country. Thus every one of Singapore's twenty experts claimed to be entirely satisfied with living arrangements, and so too did most of those in Malaya, the Philippines and Thailand. In contrast,

Indonesia, India and Pakistan attracted more than their fair share of criticism. Indeed, if these last three countries are excluded from the statistics, the 'good' percentage rises to 72, and the 'fair' and 'poor' percentages fall to 23 and 5 respectively.

With the aid of information derived from answers to the questionnaire, it is possible to compare living conditions with several other features of technical assistance work, in addition to country of location. As far as two such features are concerned—the organisation sponsoring the expert and the starting date of his mission—there is no evidence of any correlation with living conditions: Colombo Plan and U.N. personnel have encountered good and bad living conditions in much the same proportions, and these proportions have not altered noticeably over the years. But there does appear to be a link between living conditions and degree of assignment success (see Table 15). This link is at least close enough to suggest that the domestic side ought not to be completely ignored when dealing with the efficacy of technical assistance. Let us therefore consider possible reasons for dissatisfaction with living conditions.

TABLE 15
Living Conditions and Assignment Success

Living conditions	Size of sample	Degree of assignment success*			
		Most successful	Moderately successful	Failure	Total
	No.	%	%	%	%
Good	93	47	51	2	100
Fair	39	36	59	5	100
Poor	16	31	63	6	100
Total	148	43	54	3	100

* Up to time of expert's return to Australia.

Salary and Spending

As was pointed out in Chapter 3, experts seem for the most part to have been happy with their conditions of pay. Although they may have found the cost of living high, salary loadings and special allowances have usually more than compensated for this—so much so, indeed, that time and again experts have openly admitted to us that they managed to save far more during the course of their mission than they could possibly have done in Australia over an equivalent period.

Obviously a great deal depends on the adaptability of the expert and his family. If they insist on European (or Australian) food, the cost of

living is liable to be high; if they adapt their table to local food, it will be cheaper and usually better and more enjoyable.

Where overall consumption has been cut back—and there are enough instances of this to warrant some attention—price considerations do not appear to have played as decisive a role as three other factors:

(i) In view of the nature and location of their work, some experts have had little option but to be frugal. Particularly where the assignment has been situated in an outlying part of the country, far from a city or town of any consequence, primitive living conditions have often been unavoidable. This was so for a team of Snowy Mountains Authority geologists and drillers whose job it was to make a preliminary survey of a dam site on the Mekong River near the Thailand-Laos border. Members of the team were mostly housed in corrugated iron huts, sharing their quarters with local trainees and eating mainly Thai-style food. With little opportunity to purchase goods other than the essential requirements of everyday living, inevitably their rate of consumption was low and their rate of saving correspondingly high.

(ii) Individuals have sometimes made a deliberate effort to live modestly with the specific object of saving as much as possible. The instances of this to come to our notice have almost invariably involved a married man whose wife and family remained in Australia. The explanation is probably twofold: unlike the bachelor, such a person's family responsibilities have been a powerful incentive to save; and unlike other married men, he has been prepared to put up with inconvenience to a degree that would have been out of the question if his family had accompanied him. The replies to our questionnaire showed that the experts who took their families with them tended to be more critical of living conditions than those who came unaccompanied. One reason for this may be that living conditions have normally been fairly good on short-term missions where families have rarely been involved; but also experts with families have naturally been less tolerant of discomfort and therefore more inclined to be critical.

(iii) A factor encouraging some experts to live modestly has been the desire to get on as close terms as possible with the indigenous population, and the belief that this demands simple living. Occasionally individuals have endeavoured to put this view into practice in uncompromising fashion by trying to live no differently from those about them. There is the case, for instance, of the microbiologist who chose to board with a middle-class family during the six months of her mission rather than accept the comfortable hotel accommodation offered her by the authorities. She felt very strongly that the expert has a duty to foster personal goodwill and mutual understanding, and that differences in standards of living tend

inevitably to set up barriers between the expert and the local population which reduce his capacity and incentive to perform this duty properly. Most experts in broad sympathy with this view at best have made a deliberate effort to refrain from those forms of consumption that could have been interpreted as ostentatious, while continuing to live a good deal more comfortably than the vast majority of the people with whom they daily came into contact. Indeed, several individuals emphasised the danger of imitating local modes of living too closely. The expert who did this, they said, only made himself look foolish in local eyes; his prestige—an essential attribute for effective technical assistance work—was liable to suffer.

By and large, then, the salary factor in itself has not prevented experts from living comfortably. Those desiring to maintain a reasonably high standard of living have rarely been held back from doing so through lack of money, while those whose consumption has been markedly restrained have generally had other reasons. As pointed out in the chapter on recruitment, the occasional individual who complained to us that his income was too low was mainly worried about inadequate compensation for missing promotion opportunities back home; having to make sacrifices in his accustomed way of life was scarcely brought up at all.

When inadequate remuneration was mentioned in connection with spending, it usually had to do with the expert's failure to secure proper reimbursement for particular expenses incurred by him. Establishing a new home, for example, has sometimes involved an individual in exceptionally heavy commitments in the early phase of his assignment. While salary loadings and allowances have tended to compensate for this in the long run, the expert has sometimes found himself financially embarrassed for a short while; and if for some reason he was forced to abandon his mission at an early stage he was liable to lose badly in the final reckoning. Several people who complained about this went on to suggest that the best solution might be to reduce ordinary salary loadings and increase the special allowances covering the transfer costs of moving to the host country and setting up house. The kit allowance already provided for this purpose was claimed to be quite inadequate.

Entertainment expenditure has also attracted a certain amount of attention. One or two individuals who entertained a good deal in their own homes felt quite strongly that they ought to have been recompensed for out-of-pocket expenses, since entertaining had been essential to their work. But the embassy spokesmen with whom we discussed this question were not inclined to be sympathetic. While conceding that isolated individuals might have had a valid grievance, they went on to emphasise that the vast majority of experts have had to worry very little about

'keeping up appearances' and the unavoidable costs that this entails. In this respect, it was suggested, they themselves were in a much less favourable position than the general run of experts.

Housing

No single aspect of living conditions has attracted as much adverse comment as housing. This is reflected in the fact that roughly half of the 37 per cent of experts who told us that they had not been entirely happy with their living conditions referred to some feature of accommodation as the sole or chief reason for their dissatisfaction.

Little or no criticism has been directed at questions of housing finance. This is presumably because almost invariably the host government has been responsible for providing the money for accommodation, so that the expert himself has not had to worry unduly about the cost side. The only financial complaint of any consequence has been that the host government's rent subsidy tended to cover actual living quarters and no more. The expert was expected to bear the cost of furnishing and equipping his place of residence, often even having to install such things as an oven and hot-water system which in Asian countries are not generally treated as part of the permanent fittings of unfurnished dwellings. Admittedly, Colombo Plan experts are entitled to obtain through the embassy, free of charge, certain approved items such as an air conditioner, and this in many cases has helped to ease the financial strain. But individuals have frequently had to wait a considerable time and make repeated representation before actually receiving what they asked for—a particular source of grievance with experts' wives.

The two main complaints, however, have had little to do with finance. The first is that the accommodation offered was not of a sufficiently high standard: the house or apartment was not roomy enough, for example, or was in a bad state of repair, or was not adequately supplied with such basic services as water and electricity. Some experts, especially those in capital cities like Djakarta, attributed their inferior accommodation principally to the fact that housing of reasonable quality was in critically short supply. But others felt that the real trouble was that housing arrangements were in the hands of the host government which was unwilling or unable to discharge its duties properly. They referred enviously to the happy position of embassy staff whose accommodation was found for them by the Australian government.

In fairness to host governments, however, their own version of the situation should also be given. A fairly common criticism of experts—although less so of Australians than of some others—is that they tend to be too demanding in their accommodation requirements. They want to

live in large houses in fashionable areas, failing to take any real account either of the host government's limited resources or of the danger to themselves of becoming isolated from the local population. In Kuala Lumpur, for instance, the Malayan authorities had so much difficulty trying to meet experts' requests for high-standard accommodation that they decided in 1962 to introduce a system of housing allowances, leaving it entirely up to the expert himself to select his actual accommodation. Incidentally, the criticism that experts frequently have somewhat gradiose ideas about housing was made to us not only by host country officials and embassy staff; several experts who insisted on living in modest quarters so as to be in closer touch with local people drew attention to the same point. One of the things these critics most objected to was the tendency on the part of many of their compatriots and other foreign nationals to form residential enclaves almost completely divorced from the rest of the community both geographically and socially.

The second main source of grievance is the long delay experts have sometimes been subjected to before obtaining permanent accommodation, which has meant an extended period of residence in one or more hotels or in other temporary quarters. As far as short-term assignments are concerned, as well as long-term ones where the expert has been on his own, it is often a sensible arrangement to have the expert stay at a hotel for the whole period. But for someone accompanied by a family, a prolonged period in a hotel anxiously waiting to move into a permanent house can be something of an ordeal, especially for the wife and children. Unfortunately this has occurred on a surprising number of occasions; and while some families have not minded too much, others have clearly been rather upset. A senior-ranking Colombo Plan appointee in Malaya, for example, who managed to secure a permanent abode only towards the end of an assignment lasting nearly two years, informed us that frustration and worry about accommodation affected both his and his wife's health. Had he known in advance of the trouble he would have to face, he seriously doubted whether he would have agreed to take on the assignment in the first place. What particularly annoyed him—and others have said much the same—was that before leaving Australia he had been given to understand that he would be provided with a house more or less immediately on arrival and that at worst he might have to put up with hotel accommodation for a few weeks.

Delays of this kind appear to have been due to the same two factors as already referred to in connection with inferior accommodation, namely a serious shortage of suitable housing and host government inefficiency. The experience of an expert in Burma may be quoted to illustrate the second of these factors. Although there was no real shortage of accommo-

dation in Rangoon, this expert had to wait some time for a house because landlords were most reluctant to accept him as a tenant. Their reluctance stemmed from the fact that the Burmese government had built up a bad reputation in the past for not paying experts' rent until long overdue, and even then only after considerable badgering. As things turned out, when he finally did succeed in obtaining a house, the landlord had to wait nine months before receiving any payment at all.

Quite a number of those who complained to us of delays in securing accommodation also made passing reference to how they thought the situation might be improved. Their suggestions were principally these:

(i) The donor authorities should be brought more actively into the picture as far as arranging accommodation is concerned, instead of the task being left entirely to the host government—or to the expert himself—as has been normal practice in the past, particularly under the Colombo Plan.

(ii) As far as practicable, accommodation arrangements should be made in advance of the expert's arrival and not left until he actually turns up. Some individuals, apparently forewarned, have insisted that a suitable house be found for them before their departure from Australia, and it has been put to us that this should be standard practice, at least when the family is being taken.

Car

Some experts referred to the transport facilities provided in connection with their actual jobs as having been inadequate. But transport difficulties did not feature at all among the complaints of those who were not entirely happy with their living conditions, and we are therefore probably justified in assuming that individuals have been reasonably satisfied with domestic transport arrangements. If this is the case, it would be interesting to know whether this is because they had cars of their own or had been able to make liberal use of their government cars in off-duty hours, or whether they managed to get by successfully without any kind of private domestic transport. Unfortunately we do not have the necessary information to supply an answer.

Leave

Experts are entitled to annual recreation leave, and also to home leave if their assignments extend beyond two years. Practically no criticism of these arrangements has come our way. In fact in only two of the questionnaires returned to us was anything adverse said. In one case the complaint was made that embassy staff in Indonesia had access to holiday bungalows in the hills near Djakarta which Colombo Plan experts did not have. In

the other case an expert said that his application for the home leave to which he was entitled had been held up in Canberra for an unjustifiably long time, causing considerable inconvenience and uncertainty.

The small amount of adverse criticism may partly stem from the fact that, like motor transport, the leave issue was not specifically listed for comment in the questionnaire. But probably more important is the fact that leave provisions have been fairly generous. Thus Colombo Plan personnel have been entitled to five weeks' leave a year, and in addition have received certain fringe benefits such as free passages to holiday centres like Hong Kong.

Health

One of the specific questions we put to experts was whether they had enjoyed satisfactory health throughout their mission, and 18 per cent answered in the negative. In view of the fact that recruits must submit to a careful medical examination before being accepted for technical assistance work, this percentage may be thought rather high. But two things need to be borne in mind. First, little serious illness was reported, stomach upsets and the like accounting for most of the ill-health that occurred. And an External Affairs officer in Canberra informed us that during the years he was associated with the Colombo Plan he could recall only one case of a person having to relinquish his assignment because of sickness.¹

In the second place, such factors as the tropical climate and low standards of public hygiene in Asian countries probably make it inevitable that experts should be more prone to ill-health than in Australia. Thus nearly 90 per cent of those whose health was not perfect attributed the fact to the unaccustomed conditions encountered during their mission.

An interesting point arising from the questionnaire was the closeness of the connection between state of health and degree of assignment success. Table 16 shows that those whose health was good achieved considerably greater success than those who had to put up with sickness. If this is true and if, as suggested above, ill-health has primarily been due to unaccustomed conditions, then more perhaps ought to have been done to ensure that experts took proper health precautions. We have not looked carefully into this subject but it might have been desirable, for instance, to require recruits to demonstrate that they possess a basic knowledge of tropical hygiene before being sent overseas. It might also have been wise

¹ Although few of those who replied to our questionnaire suffered serious illness, from other sources we have learned of one or two Australians who actually died during or after their period of assignment as a result of diseases contracted in Asia. Our attention has also been drawn to several cases where an expert's health has been permanently affected.

to issue each expert with a medicine kit—a proposal put to us by several individuals.

TABLE 16
Health and Assignment Success

State of health	Size of sample	Degree of assignment success*			
		Most successful	Moderately successful	Failure	Total
	No.	%	%	%	%
Good	184	50	48	2	100
Some ill-health	44	30	61	9	100
Total	228	46	51	3	100

* Up to time of expert's return to Australia.

SOCIAL ACTIVITY

The contribution that the expert's social life can sometimes make towards the overall success of a mission should not be underestimated. As mentioned several times already, social activity often affords a useful means of establishing personal contact with local colleagues and with other people whose friendship may be worth cultivating for professional reasons. A number of those who answered the questionnaire made a special point of emphasising this. An adviser in Indonesia, for example, admitted to us that his social life had been the means of his becoming acquainted with a group of important politicians and senior public servants, and that as a result of building up these contacts he had been able to bring greater pressure to bear on the authorities to get things done on behalf of his assignment. Although he never really felt at home with the Indonesians at the social level, he regarded it as his duty to mix with them out of office hours as much as possible for the sake of his mission. Another expert in the same country told us that one of the reasons he regularly entertained local colleagues was because he found that suggestions about work were more likely to be accepted if they were made in the informal atmosphere of the home instead of on the job.

It has not always been easy, however, for experts to establish social contact with the local population. The language barrier has sometimes presented difficulties. Thus an engineer found that his social dealings with the Vietnamese people had to be confined almost entirely to those who could speak English, and this severely handicapped him in his attempt to

make friends. Occasionally differences in modes of behaviour and social convention have also created obstacles. This may be illustrated by the case of the young unmarried woman who was forced to restrict her social activity because of the prevailing local attitude to women and to sexual matters. But what more than anything else seems to have effectively prevented experts from mixing socially with members of the host country has been the wide gap in living standards. Local colleagues have frequently been reluctant to accept an invitation to the expert's home, since they would then have been under some obligation to return the hospitality. This would have been embarrassing for them: for one thing, their income would not have allowed them to entertain the expert in the same style; for another, they did not wish the expert to see the modest circumstances in which they lived. But some individuals have obviously handled the situation more tactfully than others. An expert in Djakarta, for example, told us that when inviting Indonesians to his home he always saw to it that the entertainment was pitched at a modest level, with simple local food and very little alcohol.

To end our discussion at this point would leave us with a somewhat unbalanced picture of the social side of an expert's life. There are three further things that also need mentioning. First, while home entertainment has probably been the main way in which experts have come to meet local people, it would be wrong to suggest that it has been the only way. Sporting clubs, cultural societies and church organisations, for example, have provided numbers of experts with the opportunity of mixing with and getting to know residents of the country. To a lesser extent the same has been true of youth bodies, one expert having acted as scoutmaster of a local troop for three years. There can be little doubt that contacts established through such channels as these have generally had a beneficial effect on the expert and on those with whom he has been brought into touch.

Secondly, the greater portion of the leisure time of most experts has been spent in the company of fellow Australians and other foreign nationals rather than with local people. This is understandable and not necessarily to be condemned. What is undesirable, though, is that experts should be so devoted to each other's company and their social lives so cut off from the world around them that they never really make personal contact with local residents and lose whatever chance they might otherwise have of getting to know their associates at work. Australians are by no means the worst offenders in this regard, but it is something that needs to be continuously guarded against.

Thirdly, as well as bringing the expert into closer touch with local colleagues and others, social activity may contribute to the success of

technical assistance work in a further way. It affords an opportunity to relax, and a certain amount of relaxation when assignment cares can be cast aside is essential if individuals are to sustain their physical and mental vigour. The threat of boredom is likely to be especially great in the case of bachelors and grass widowers with no family life in which to seek diversion from the worries of work. A bachelor who had to cope with this problem has put forward the suggestion that the donor authorities ought to do more to help individuals like himself to join local social and sports clubs. Most such clubs have lengthy and involved entry formalities, and in the normal course of events it may take an expert many months to gain admission.

Boredom is also likely to be a real problem for experts' wives, particularly when they do not have their children with them. This is one aspect of the wider issue of wives accompanying their husbands on assignments, and before concluding we ought to say a few words on this question.

WIVES

Nearly half the experts covered by our survey took their wives with them on their assignments, and in the replies to the questionnaire there were numbers of references both to the advantages and to the disadvantages of this practice.

Not surprisingly, most stress on the credit side has been placed on the personal companionship associated with having one's wife on hand to ease the loneliness of a strange environment and to share in the excitement of new experiences. But wives have been helpful in other ways as well. Several experts, for example, referred to the advantage of having their wives with them from the point of view of establishing social contacts and helping to entertain. On the professional side, too, wives have sometimes proved an asset. In one or two cases they have done secretarial work for their husbands: an expert in Indonesia informed us that his wife's services as a secretary had been indispensable, partly because the local staff's English was not sufficiently fluent and partly because much of his correspondence, especially with the Department of External Affairs, was of a confidential nature and he was reluctant to allow Indonesian personnel to handle it. In isolated instances wives have also acted as interpreters. Thus a UNESCO adviser in Laos relied heavily on his wife when he wanted to communicate in French.

On the other hand, a wife's presence can at times be something of a liability in at least two respects. In the first place, it may impede the expert's movements and reduce the scope for flexibility in conducting technical assistance work. No one taking a wife admitted that this was so

in his case, but several experts who went by themselves said that they probably would have come up against this kind of problem if their wives had been with them. It must be borne in mind, of course, that wives have rarely accompanied their husbands on very short-term missions which are the ones likely to demand the greatest amount of manoeuvrability.

In the second place, wives seem to have had more difficulty than husbands in adapting themselves to their new environment. With limited opportunity of meeting people, servants to do the housework, and little to occupy the mind, the women folk have often been hard put to avoid becoming bored and frustrated—a point already alluded to. On the whole they also appear to have been less tolerant than their husbands about shortcomings in domestic arrangements and more reluctant to accept sacrifices in their accustomed way of living. The embassy staff in several countries, for instance, informed us that they receive most of their complaints about unsatisfactory living conditions from wives rather than from experts themselves.

It is hard to say how far the inability of wives to adapt themselves as readily as their husbands has had adverse effects on technical assistance work, but in some instances it has undoubtedly meant extra worry for the expert. We do not wish to imply that wives should be discouraged from accompanying experts on longer-term assignments, since a wife's presence may be highly desirable from the point of view of companionship. However, some attention should perhaps be paid at the time of recruitment to the willingness of experts' wives to make the necessary adjustment. As a first step, the authorities might consider preparing a brief document on conditions of life for wives which could be issued to intending experts in appropriate cases.

Follow Up

When an expert's contract expires and he returns to Australia, responsibility for ensuring that his contribution to technical assistance continues to bear fruit rests primarily with the host country. The authorities there must see to it that those members of the work force benefiting from contact with the expert are employed as usefully as possible, whether this be in training others, in exploiting the results of research, in administering institutions which the expert helped to establish or reorganise, in operating and maintaining equipment installed by the expert, or in performing whatever other follow-up duties are demanded. They must also be prepared to examine dispassionately any changes recommended by the expert and take steps to implement them if obviously sound and practical.

Unfortunately it is difficult to judge how far these things have actually been done properly in the past. Although experts proved to be a mine of information on most aspects of their assignments, all too often they could tell us little or nothing about the subsequent history of their projects for the simple reason that they did not know themselves. Indeed, on learning that we were about to visit Asia, a number of them made a special point of requesting that we let them know if we found out what had since happened to their projects.

Experts tended to attribute their own ignorance chiefly to the donor authorities who, they alleged, were badly out of touch with what had been going on and in any case chose to keep what they knew to themselves. The official attitude seemed to be that the expert, formally severing his link with aid as he does on returning to Australia, has no reason to concern himself with what becomes of his project. Experts were generally unhappy about this, regarding the authorities as being under a certain moral obligation to keep them in the picture. It was inconsiderate of them not to do so, they complained, for it was only natural that a person should be curious to know the outcome of his own efforts.¹ Some went even

¹ It is only fair to point out that according to officials in Canberra many experts were not the least bit interested in their projects once they arrived back in Australia. This does not accord with our own findings; but of course such experts may not have bothered to answer our questionnaire.

further: they would have liked to have been given the opportunity of participating actively in follow-up proceedings, and felt that regular briefing would at least have been a step in this direction.

The experts who were able to tell us most were principally those who had maintained direct contact with the host country after returning to Australia. Sometimes this contact was in the form of professional or personal correspondence with individuals connected with their projects, such as former counterparts. In other cases the expert had revisited the location and managed to see things at first hand. This may have occurred in the course of an overseas trip further afield, the opportunity being taken to stop off briefly in the host country to examine developments and look up old acquaintances. Alternatively, but less probably, business directly associated with his former mission may have made it necessary for the expert to return to the project on one or more occasions—his assignment, in a sense, was a continuing one. There was the engineer, for example, who spent two years in Indonesia planning the installation of major equipment and who subsequently returned periodically to inspect work still in progress. He was, in other words, in a much better position than most to advise us on follow-up proceedings.

Some idea of the state of ignorance of experts may be gleaned from the fact that 68 of the 242 individuals who responded to the questionnaire refrained from indicating how successful their projects had been after their departure, whereas only 9 declined to comment on the degree of success for the period they were actually there. Some of these 68, admittedly, were reluctant to commit themselves because they felt it was still too early to assess the full impact of their work or because they did not believe that their assignments lent themselves to meaningful evaluation. But the majority of the 68 confessed that they frankly did not know how things had been going. Moreover, many of the remaining 174 emphasised that their success rating was based on rather slender evidence and should not be taken too seriously. This note of caution proved to be justified, for when we later inspected some of the projects for ourselves we found that what experts had previously told us was not always accurate or up to date, and in a number of cases we were obliged to amend their rating.

The trouble we had in obtaining follow-up material from experts would not have mattered greatly had officials in Canberra or at the embassies abroad been able to fill in the gaps for us. But although we did not press the Australian authorities for post-mission information to the extent that we might have done, we gained the impression that there was a great deal they did not know. At times it must of course have been difficult, if not impossible, to maintain a watching brief. The project may,

for example, have been located in an outlying area inaccessible to regular embassy inspection; or it may have had to do with transmitting know-how in circumstances where it was extremely hard to identify the subsequent exploitation of this know-how; or it may have been connected with the implementation of reforms which for one reason or another the host country was not anxious to publicise. But even allowing for such problems, we imagine that a great deal of useful data could have been acquired by an organisation prepared to make the effort.

With certain types of project, admittedly, the effort does seem to have been made. This was so, for instance, with some of the more ambitious ventures where Australian participation was substantial (particularly on the capital side) and where for purposes of promoting a favourable overseas image of Australia it was thought desirable to continue linking Australia's name with the project, even though assistance was no longer being given. It is also true that where Australia was still contributing aid, the Colombo Plan authorities were likely to be more fully acquainted with the impact of the work of experts formerly attached to the undertaking, but only because the project was continuing to attract Australian aid. By and large, though, the attitude of External Affairs on collecting information does not appear to have differed greatly from its attitude towards the retiring expert: once the latter had done his job and all the necessary formalities been completed, what subsequently happened to the project was not the Australian government's business, just as it should not have been the expert's either. From this point on it was up to the host country alone to keep an eye on things.

We are not favourably placed to comment on the extent to which U.N. agencies have kept abreast of events in the follow-up phase, since we did not have an opportunity of visiting the headquarters of any of the agencies. However, several U.N. experts complained to us that during their briefing sessions at headquarters just prior to assuming their appointments they had been unable to extract much worthwhile information on the outcome of earlier projects; which would suggest that headquarters staff, like their opposite numbers in External Affairs, were frequently in the dark about what was going on. On the other hand, the U.N. Development Programme Representatives in Asian countries struck us as being better informed than Australian embassy officials, although they were still unable to tell us some things we wanted to know. That the United Nations has not been beyond criticism in this area of responsibility is borne out in the following remarks of a U.N. evaluation team in Chile:

The problem of obtaining systematic information on the specific results of each of the technical assistance projects of the United Nations agencies seems to call for prompt examination. In view of the apparent lack of

interest on the part of the United Nations agencies in ascertaining the results of technical assistance projects already terminated, it appears urgent that serious consideration be given to the need for knowledge of the final consequences of the technical co-operation provided, in the light of the intentions and capability of the Governments to make use of the projects' practical results in the most effective manner.²

In addition to the experts and sponsoring organisations, the host countries themselves were an obvious source of information on follow up. Here again, we were frequently thwarted in our attempt to get at the facts. When we were able to talk with an expert's former colleagues, especially if they were still employed in the same capacity as before, or were able to visit the actual location of an assignment and identify the results of an expert's efforts in the form of training courses, capital equipment, broadcasting programs, research activity and the like—when this was possible, we often managed to pick up valuable material that could not be obtained elsewhere. But all too often the people who might have helped us had in the meanwhile been transferred to other jobs and could not be traced. (This was especially so in Indonesia where the shifting of public servants from one post to another, and also to different parts of the country, has been very common, sometimes whole government departments being disbanded and their staff scattered far and wide.) The difficulty of contacting personnel did not matter so much when we were able to inspect what remained of an expert's work, such as the equipment he had helped to install or the vocational training centre he had played a part in establishing. But in many instances this proved impossible because the expert's duties had not been of the kind to produce identifiable results, or his assignment had taken place so long ago that its external manifestations had disappeared or become absorbed with other developments. Moreover, the local bodies administering foreign aid could help us here to only a limited degree. While the officials we talked with often had interesting and informative things to say about foreign aid as a whole, and occasionally about Australia's total contribution, they were rarely able to throw much light on the results of particular Australian missions.

HOST COUNTRY EFFORTS

Paucity of material prevents us from gauging at all accurately the extent to which projects involving Australian experts have been followed up conscientiously and efficiently. However, answers to the question 'How would you rate the degree of success or failure of your mission since your departure?', modified and supplemented by information from other

² Report of the Chile Evaluation Team, p. 60.

sources, furnished us with success ratings for 185 assignments. Their breakdown shows that 28 per cent were 'most successful', 61 per cent 'moderately successful', and 11 per cent 'failures'. These figures are not particularly revealing in themselves, but what is interesting is to compare them with the corresponding success-rating percentages of 46, 51 and 3 for the actual assignment period. Even allowing for the incompleteness of the data and lack of uniformity in evaluation standards, the differences between these two sets of figures are too great to be disregarded. They suggest that much of the initial success of Australian experts has been nullified by what happened later—a conclusion which probably comes as no great surprise to those acquainted with foreign aid and its problems, but which is significant all the same.

To the extent that there has been a falling off in performance at the post-mission stage, the explanation in the first instance must be sought in things that host countries have done or failed to do since, as already indicated, the following up of assignments is primarily their responsibility. What are some of these things?

Inadequate Finance

Poor results can often be traced to the failure of host governments to provide enough money for the work to be properly sustained. This problem has not of course been confined to the follow-up period: a number of experts, while still carrying out their assignments, were handicapped by lack of funds. But the problem seems on the whole to have been more serious at the post-mission stage. For one thing, the ending of an expert's term of appointment has commonly coincided with the ending of foreign capital aid as well, leaving the host country to shoulder the financial burden alone from that point. Admittedly, the outlay needed to keep an activity going, once under way, has in many instances been less than the cost of initially putting it on its feet; and at the same time local funds have no longer had to be found to cover certain expenses connected with the expert's presence on the job, such as those relating to his accommodation and transport. But these offsetting factors have not always been sufficient to compensate for the termination of foreign aid, and governments have therefore found themselves at times in the unenviable position of having to raise more revenue from taxation, to cut back on other forms of expenditure, or to economise on the funds allocated to the project in question. Confronted with this choice, it is inevitable that the authorities should sometimes have opted for the third solution.

This leads on to a second possible reason for financial stringencies being more pronounced at the post-mission stage. As long as the expert was still on the job, the host country has been under a certain amount of

pressure to provide adequate funds—pressure exerted by the expert himself and reinforced by assurances of local financial support when the project was originally agreed to. But after the expert has left and the pressure relaxes, the host government can be expected to view its financial obligations with less enthusiasm and determination, and particularly with ever-mounting claims on the public purse from other quarters, it may be strongly tempted to divert money and resources away from follow-up work. Evidence suggests that host governments have not always been able to resist this temptation.

The financial difficulties besetting many projects in their later phases, and the causes underlying them, are clearly brought out in the case of the artificial limb factory attached to Manila's orthopaedic hospital. This, with Australian help over a number of years in the form of experts, capital and overseas training, developed into a highly successful venture. But when we visited the factory in 1965, a 6-year agreement was about to expire, bringing to an end Australia's association with the project. Many of those connected with the undertaking whom we interviewed in Manila—including the last of the experts shortly to retire—were obviously more than a little concerned about the effects that this withdrawal of aid was going to have on the future of the project. A good local staff had been trained by a succession of experts to take over the running of the factory, so that the impending departure of the final Australian was not in itself a cause for anxiety. What was disturbing, however, was that capital aid would be terminating as well, leaving the factory wholly dependent on the Philippines government for the funds required for continued operation. Serious doubts were expressed whether the Philippines government was yet fully aware of the additional financial load it would soon have to carry or whether, when it did become aware, it would give the project high enough priority to enable it to function properly.

Unfortunately we have not had the opportunity of verifying what has subsequently become of this artificial limb project. But we are acquainted with the later history of other projects, clearly bearing the imprint of financial economy. For example, a vocational training centre which an Australian played an important part in establishing—not this time in the Philippines—deteriorated markedly after his departure because lack of funds (including foreign exchange) prevented the centre from buying spare parts for teaching aids or even from manufacturing these parts itself. In the same country a rehabilitation hospital to which a doctor and several nurses from Australia were at one time attached found itself gravely short of patients by the mid-1960s. The government was no longer willing to subsidise those wishing to attend the hospital for treatment, and in consequence there was now a large staff with little to do.

These are by no means isolated cases: other projects might equally well have been chosen as illustrations. Moreover, one of the factors discussed separately below—lack of personnel—is closely tied up with problems of finance.

Political Obstruction

It is reasonable to assume that the activities set in motion by an expert, and hence any follow-up steps required, are usually politically acceptable to the host government, for otherwise the expert's services would hardly have been sought in the first place. This may not be so, however, when it comes to implementing recommendations. In a sense, of course, an expert filling an advisory post 'recommends' every time he is consulted by his counterpart or by somebody else, but this is not what we mean here. Rather, we are referring to the more formal proposals suggested by experts, usually in their terminal reports, which are intended to serve as a basis for follow-up action. In the case of fact-finding missions, the drawing up of such proposals may indeed be the main object of the assignment; but even where an expert is involved in more immediately practical duties, at the end of his appointment he is quite likely to have occasion to offer suggestions for improvement. In neither instance have host authorities necessarily heeded such advice in the past, and sometimes the reason has been that the advice was not politically acceptable.

Dissatisfaction on this score has been expressed by a number of experts. Thus an accountant whose assignment was connected with the management side of a government business undertaking, complained that although many of his recommendations for improving administration were subsequently implemented, the really vital ones were ignored. To have carried them out would have meant drawing attention to widespread corruption in government enterprises as well as to the inefficiency of individual executives, and the political leaders were too deeply committed to be particularly anxious for these things to be dragged into the open. There was also the case of the expert concerned with banking reform. At the end of his inquiry he submitted a report recommending a line of action different from the one that the host government, for political reasons, hoped to pursue, and in consequence nothing was done about his proposals.

Occasionally a change of government has probably been responsible for an expert's recommendations being shelved. This, for instance, appears to explain why a report dealing with improvements in social medicine was never followed up in one country, despite the interest in reform displayed by the government during the expert's visit, and why in another country proposals for controlling land sales came to nothing.

Although not a political consideration in quite the same way as any of the cases quoted above, the Vietnam war and its repercussions on follow-up activity may appropriately be referred to at this juncture. Because of the fighting it has proved virtually impossible to trace the results of many of the projects in Vietnam with which Australians were at one time connected, but we know for sure that at least some of these projects have been seriously affected or totally abandoned. For instance, the Ben Cat dairy farm near Saigon which Australia was instrumental in setting up in 1957 and helped to supervise for a number of years, was overrun by the Viet Cong in 1963, although much of the equipment was salvaged.

Lack of Personnel

Some of the difficulties of attracting and retaining counterparts have already been discussed in Chapter 5 where it was suggested that the problem in at least certain parts of Asia largely centres on the limited supply of suitable personnel and the many competing claims on those available. In the earlier chapter we were chiefly concerned with the counterpart problem from the point of view of its immediate effects on the expert's work. But the implications afterwards are equally, if not more, important. Some of the duties of a counterpart, such as lining up contacts and acting as interpreter, admittedly tend to disappear once the expert's job is done, and to that extent the shortage of counterparts is less of a worry at the post-mission stage. On the other hand, we must remember that the counterpart system is primarily intended to serve as a channel for transmitting expertise to particular individuals in the host country who, it is hoped, will in turn be able to pass on what they have learned to others when the expert is no longer there. In this sense the counterpart system only begins to assume full significance after the expert's departure, and a shortage of counterparts is likely to have its most undesirable consequences in the follow-up phase of technical assistance.

A further reason why personnel difficulties assume special significance in the follow-up period is that there is likely to be less official resistance to counterparts, trainees and others connected with a project moving to alternative jobs (or taking on additional part-time work) when the expert is no longer on hand to press for their retention, and government enthusiasm for the venture is beginning to flag. One of several experts who made this point was an air traffic officer in Indonesia. He felt justified in rating his mission highly successful when judged by what was achieved while he was there, but regretfully had to admit that in the long run most of his effort was wasted, as nearly all the best people who had been with him were sent shortly afterwards to West Irian on quite different work.

Repeatedly during his assignment he had successfully intervened to stop this from happening but once he had gone the authorities quickly succumbed to pressures from other quarters.

Keeping staff from moving elsewhere has also been particularly difficult at the post-mission stage because by that time the locals trained by an expert have often acquired sufficient qualifications and practical experience to be offered remunerative employment outside the government sector. Thus within a year of an expert completing an assignment in Thailand, all four of the geologists he helped to train had left the government enterprise to which they had been attached to take up more lucrative posts elsewhere. Subsequently this expert went back to Thailand several times on further missions and on each occasion the same thing happened.

Faulty Planning

Another reason why in the follow-up period projects have not always achieved the progress expected of them is faulty host country planning. Ventures have sometimes been badly thought out from the start, and although in many instances this has shown up while the expert was still on the job, occasionally it only became apparent afterwards. Thus there was the case of the food technologist assigned to investigate the feasibility of making cheese from buffalo milk. He accomplished what he set out to do and in that sense his assignment was successful. It was clear in retrospect, however, that from the outset, the authorities should have given more attention to enlarging overall milk production and rather less to cheese-making and similar quality improvements. As things turned out, milk was in such short supply that none could be spared for cheese-making so that little if any practical use was made of the expert's findings.

Faulty planning by host governments largely has its roots in other factors already discussed—shortage of funds and personnel, and political interference. But it stems too from inadequate attention to initial evaluation. As a result of the failure to assess projects properly at the commencement of proceedings to ensure that they are worth while, and to determine the action required to make them as successful as possible, some experts such as the food technologist just referred to have been assigned tasks which, however well carried out, have not had the subsequent impact they deserved. Also if the disciplining influence of initial evaluation and the sense of purpose such evaluation tends to foster are absent, there is more likelihood of governments later being persuaded to amend their pre-arranged plans in response to undesirable pressures.

Of particular significance in the present context is evaluation concerned specifically with post-mission performance. Unless this is regularly done, host governments will have difficulty recognising and dealing

promptly with problems of follow up as they arise; they will also be less well placed to avoid past mistakes when planning new projects. Unfortunately, evaluation at the post-mission stage has occurred extremely rarely, and certainly none of the countries investigated by us were adopting it as standard practice in 1965. This is not perhaps surprising when it is recalled that the officials in these countries could supply us with only a limited amount of factual information on former Australian projects, for without an acquaintance with the facts, interpretation and evaluation are impossible. But if it is not surprising, it is nonetheless disturbing, and points strongly to the need for recipient countries to improve their machinery for recording, interpreting and appraising follow-up results.

Inadequate Administration

Even where projects have been sensibly thought out and a conscientious effort has been made by the planning authorities to fulfil their commitments, the results have all too often been rather disappointing because of ineffective administration on the part of the organisations responsible for executing the projects. Ineffective administration is connected to some extent with the shortages of finance and personnel previously alluded to; it is also connected with such factors as the size and structure of the organisations in question and the calibre of the particular officials in charge.

Our main source of information on administration has been the experts themselves, and understandably they have been unable to tell us very much about the quality of administration in the follow-up period. But

TABLE 17
Host Country Administration and Subsequent Success

Standard of host country administration	Size of sample	Degree of assignment success*			
		Most successful	Moderately successful	Failure	Total
	No.	%	%	%	%
Good	33	42	52	6	100
Fair	46	17	72	11	100
Poor	44	7	66	27	100
Total	123	20	64	16	100

* Allowing for what happened after expert's return to Australia.

approximately half of those who answered the questionnaire volunteered some sort of comment on what they thought of the administration during their mission, and we may take this as a rough indication of what things were like afterwards. Our findings are shown in Table 17, plotted against assignment performance ratings in the follow-up phase. Although the

statistics in the table are not reliable enough to be decisive proof of anything, they point strongly to the conclusion that the administrative inefficiency of the organisation employing the expert has had a significant bearing on the progress subsequently made. Thus, of those assignments in which administration was described as good, 42 per cent were most successful afterwards and 6 per cent were failures, whereas the corresponding figures for poor administration were 7 per cent and 27 per cent.

Even if there is some connection between the quality of administration and post-mission results, we are not entitled to infer that indifferent administration accounts for projects deteriorating in the follow-up period. For as we saw in Chapter 6, there appears to be an equally close connection between the standard of administration and the success achieved by experts while on the job, suggesting that the effect of poor administration may rather have been to inhibit progress in both periods to something like the same extent. However, without much fuller information on administrative performance, including data relating specifically to the post-mission phase itself, this conclusion must be regarded as extremely tentative.

DONOR AUTHORITIES

Although responsibility for ensuring that technical assistance continues to bear fruit after the expert completes his assignment rests principally with the host government, there are also certain things that the donor authority may do to assist—things that have not always been properly attended to in the past.

Terminal Reports

At the end of his term of appointment, an expert has normally been required to submit a terminal report to the Australian government or the U.N. agency sponsoring him. This document has sometimes been brief and formal, little more than the announcement of the expert's retirement and an acknowledgment of his indebtedness to various individuals who helped him during his assignment. At other times, however, it has run to a number of pages—perhaps as many as fifteen or twenty—and has been taken up with describing in greater or lesser detail the measures adopted, the difficulties that arose, the results achieved, and the job still remaining to be done. In the course of discussing his experiences, an expert has sometimes had highly critical things to say about particular aspects of an Asian country's policies and practices that would almost certainly embarrass or offend if the authorities in that country were to be told about them. Therefore, although a copy of the expert's report has normally been

forwarded to the host government which in turn has probably brought it to the attention of the ministry or institution to which the expert was attached during his assignment, not infrequently this has been an abridged or toned down version rather than the original submission.

The extent to which the relevant authorities in the recipient countries have carefully studied the contents of the terminal reports sent to them seems in practice to have varied a good deal from country to country and also according to the organisation to which the expert was assigned, the nature of the mission, and the type of document submitted. Thus the report of a top-level scientist whose task was to investigate ways of coping with an outbreak of cattle disease which threatened local food production, would almost certainly have been examined fairly thoroughly, since the problem was one of immediate and practical significance, and the local agriculture department would no doubt have been under strong pressure from several quarters to find a solution and find it quickly. On the other hand, the report of, say, a young teacher of English working very much on his own with only the most modest results to show for his efforts and no local body keenly interested in furthering his work, might well have been filed away after only a cursory reading—if indeed it was read at all.

The difficulty of building up a clear overall picture of the use made of terminal reports by host nations was brought home to us on visiting India, a country with an above-average reputation for the way technical assistance is administered. The opportunity was taken, while there, of discussing the question of terminal reports with a number of reasonably senior government officials, including members of the Indian Planning Commission, and we were confronted with a wide divergence of opinion on the potential usefulness of such reports and the actual attention paid to them by the Indians. Some said that reports were most valuable and were usually studied carefully, while others implied exactly the opposite. Those adopting the latter view were occasionally willing to concede that their own people were partly to blame for reports being underutilised. It was admitted, for instance, that filing arrangements tended to be uncoordinated and haphazard in India, and that as a result reports could not always be located when they were wanted. But it was the reports themselves that were principally blamed. They were often badly written, we were told, even by excellent experts; they were not frank enough; and they sometimes gave the impression of having been composed not so much to inform the reader as to place the writer in as favourable a light as possible. (These criticisms were not directed specifically at Australian reports, and the point about reports being composed for the benefit of the writer was meant to refer chiefly to American career personnel whose promotion within the AID structure depended on giving a good account of them-

selves.) One or two officials also made the comment that terminal reports were really only worth while if they included, or were accompanied by, scientific and technical advice that could be readily applied. Instruction manuals were, for this reason, of more value than conventional reports, and special praise was given to an Australian poultry expert who had prepared several such manuals.

Getting back to the donor side, we can usefully identify two major purposes of terminal reports. The first is to help the donor authorities cope more effectively with a broad range of technical assistance problems that may arise in the future. Each report, by adding to the available body of knowledge in the hands of the authorities, should enable better-informed decisions to be reached on the types of projects worth sponsoring, the countries to which aid should be directed, the optimum duration of assignments, the qualities to look for in recruits, as well as many other things. We shall be returning to this subject towards the end of the chapter.

The second and more immediate purpose is to give experts an opportunity of advising on the measures that they believe ought to be taken to follow up their own particular assignments, and donor authorities the opportunity of finding out how they can help. These considerations are obviously important in the case of the reports of experts sent by the Australian government or United Nations to vet prospective foreign aid projects. But even with the common run of missions that have nothing directly to do with vetting—missions concerned with training teachers and technicians, installing capital, carrying out research, advising on matters of administration and so on—even here terminal reports frequently contain ideas and suggestions worth following up.

What about the particular experts in our survey: how conscientiously were their reports read by donor officials? As far as project-vetting missions are concerned, the submissions were probably studied fairly closely for obvious reasons. And they were probably studied fairly promptly too. This is because in most instances the authorities were awaiting the expert's report in order to reach a final decision on a request for aid already before them, and were therefore under a certain amount of pressure to reach a decision quickly. But occasionally the Australian government, to its embarrassment, was prevented from acting speedily because of the long time taken by an expert to prepare his submission after returning to Australia. Every now and again, indeed, an expert let the authorities down completely by never getting round to drafting a report in spite of repeated reminders.

How thoroughly reports were normally read is less easy to judge in the case of those assignments in which writing a terminal report was

incidental to the expert's primary task. Reliable information is hard to come by, consisting as it largely does of guarded comments made to us by Colombo Plan and U.N. officials. Admittedly, the extent to which an expert's advice was in practice heeded may throw some light on the thoroughness with which his report was scrutinised. But taking note of an expert's suggestions and acting on them are not quite the same thing, and for the moment we are only concerned with the former. Added to this, factual material on the follow-up measures actually adopted by the donor authorities is itself too fragmentary to serve as a basis for confident generalisation.

However, the information to hand, such as it is, has led us to the following tentative conclusions about the past:

(i) Terminal reports for the most part were not closely studied in Canberra. Once any editing which the host government's copy might require had been completed, the original version was filed away and usually forgotten about fairly quickly.

(ii) As a result, full use was not made of terminal reports, either in giving the authorities a lead on what steps ought to be taken to follow up the particular assignments in question, or in building up a pool of 'intelligence' to help the authorities plan and carry out subsequent technical assistance projects, or in providing later experts working in the same field with an account of what had been achieved so far.

(iii) On the other hand, reports sometimes proved useful in other quarters. Where the expert, for example, belonged to an organisation such as the Australian Broadcasting Commission which was more than ordinarily interested in the job being done, a copy of his report was likely to find its way into the organisation's hands to be carefully studied and if necessary acted upon.

(iv) Although not markedly so, U.N. agencies seem on the whole to have been more thorough and systematic than the Australian government in processing reports. Two factors referred to in earlier chapters probably explain the latter's poorer showing: (a) a grave shortage of staff both in Canberra and at the embassies to cope with the many and varied tasks associated with administering foreign aid; and (b) lack of serious interest in aid work on the part of those responsible for its administration.

Debriefing

The donor authorities' failure to take full advantage of terminal reports would not have mattered so much had experts been properly debriefed—that is, had they been given an adequate opportunity at the end of their assignments of discussing with sponsoring officials the problems encountered and their ideas on what should now be done.

Debriefing, however, did not figure prominently under the Colombo Plan, at least down to 1965. While one or two of the experts who answered our questionnaire reported having had a debriefing session in Canberra with an official from External Affairs, this appears to have been the exception rather than the rule and to have occurred only when the expert himself pressed for it—and not always even then. Immediately after returning from Ceylon, for example, one individual made a trip to Canberra on his own initiative to report on his work but found it impossible to obtain an interview with anybody. He was particularly anxious to discuss certain aspects of his experiences with the Colombo Plan authorities and went so far as to imply that his inability to do so had greatly diminished the impact of his assignment. But even if he had received a hearing, it is doubtful if he would have gone away entirely satisfied, for those given an interview were often disappointed with what took place. Thus one individual informed us that the only thing the official who debriefed him seemed to want to know was whether his accommodation had been adequate, since a fellow Australian still working in the same country had recently complained about poor housing. On learning that he had no criticism himself to make on this score, the official was immensely relieved and apparently prepared on the strength of this one item of news to judge his mission a success.

Debriefing probably played a more significant role in U.N. assignments, an expert at the end of his term of appointment usually paying a visit to the world or regional headquarters of the agency sponsoring him, where he underwent some form of debriefing. But experts were not on the whole greatly impressed with what took place. Some complained to us that their visit to headquarters had ended up as little more than a social call; others described their debriefing as a completely unsystematic affair, the points raised depending entirely on what the expert volunteered to talk about.

Inadequate debriefing probably goes a long way towards explaining why so many experts were only too eager to discuss their assignments with us. They were pleased and flattered that someone should at last be interested in hearing all about their experiences after the indifference shown by the authorities and they only hoped that our report would do some good in stirring up action.

Watching Brief

If the donor authorities are to contribute in positive fashion to the success of follow up, then they must first be alive to the facts. While information on the assignment period can largely be derived from terminal reports and debriefing sessions, discovering what happens afterwards must mainly be

a matter of direct communication with host countries themselves. This in turn requires that donor officials in these countries should maintain close liaison with the local people administering aid and endeavour to learn all they can from them. It also requires keeping a watchful eye, where possible, on the actual projects and their progress.

From what was said earlier in the chapter about the difficulty we had in obtaining post-mission material from the donor authorities, it is fairly evident that fact-gathering at the follow-up stage has been sporadic at best. We have already suggested two reasons for this as far as the Australian government is concerned: (a) the virtual impossibility of identifying the results of some types of assignments; and (b) the attitude in official circles that what happened after an expert's job was completed was solely the host country's business. Two further reasons are also worth mentioning: (c) the heavy burden of other duties falling on embassy staff, which in the past left them little time to play the part of watch-dog; and (d) fear that to ask too many questions was likely to be interpreted by the host country as snooping.

There is little doubt that (c) is a valid point and that more staff, especially more staff qualified for this kind of work, was needed by the embassies in the 1950s and early 1960s to cope with Colombo Plan activities—a question taken up again in the final chapter. The importance of (d), however, should not be exaggerated. A number of other countries, as well as international bodies and private foundations, have managed to keep themselves well briefed on post-mission operations without antagonising host governments, and there is no obvious reason why Australia could not have done the same. If the embassies had gone about the task in the right way, it is unlikely that offence would have been taken; local officials might in fact have been impressed had a little more interest been shown. We certainly did not encounter opposition ourselves, or sense any undercurrent of ill-feeling, when approaching local officials for information in the course of our investigation. And it is conceivable that they would have been more knowledgeable about Australian aid, and therefore better able to help us, had embassy staff previously made greater use of them.

Active Participation

The follow-up duties so far discussed are all essentially passive ones in the sense of having no direct bearing on what actually happens to projects during the post-mission stage. However, they help to enlighten the donor authorities on what still needs to be done, thus providing a basis for positive action. Which brings us to the question of active participation in the work of follow up.

In the case of missions concerned with investigating prospective projects, the nature of this participation is clear enough: the government can act on the advice received. This generally appears to have been done, although progress was occasionally held up because of the difficulty of recruiting personnel for the posts that the expert recommended should be created. In an earlier chapter, for instance, reference was made to the report of a two-man team proposing that Australia should supply six scientists for an irrigation research project in Thailand. It will be recalled that the Australian government immediately agreed to this but then had great difficulty in attracting suitable recruits, with the result that two years later the original recommendation of the two-man team had still not been fully implemented. But cases of this kind were fairly rare. If anything, indeed, the opposite tendency—putting recommendations into effect too speedily—has probably given rise to more criticism. Elsewhere, for example, we have referred to the complaint that the Australian authorities, on the basis of the findings of project-vetting reports, proceeded to order capital equipment before the experts who would be installing or using it had been consulted.

A second way in which the Australian government can actively participate is by bringing pressure to bear on host countries to ensure that they persevere with their post-mission work if their interest and enthusiasm start to flag. But to do this presupposes that the Australian government is fully acquainted with what is going on, and is in sufficiently close contact with local officials to be able to give advice and exert pressure in a friendly but firm manner. As already pointed out, however, in neither of these respects was Australia well placed in the past, nor could a great deal have been expected until embassies improved their fact-collecting and established closer links with local officials in the way that other countries and organisations had done.

It would be wrong to create the impression, though, that the Australian government has never brought direct or indirect pressure to bear on host countries. There was a case not very long ago, for example, where a project to which Australia had previously given a substantial amount of aid was threatened through lack of local financial support. An effort was therefore made by the Australian ambassador to induce the host government to allocate more funds. We understand that the government was informed, as diplomatically as possible, that if the money was not forthcoming Australia might have to think seriously about cutting down on future aid to that country. However, pressure of this kind has probably not been applied very often, although understandably it is not easy to get the facts.

A third means of participation is for the Australian government to

encourage former experts to maintain contact with their old colleagues, thereby making it possible for experts to continue giving advice by correspondence after their assignments are over. Although some of the experts we questioned managed to keep in touch in this way, it was rarely in response to official prompting. They had usually acted on their own initiative, and if there had been any prompting it generally came from the organisation employing them. Thus several of the staff of the State Electricity Commission of Victoria who worked for the Thailand Lignite Authority were encouraged by the Commission to go on exchanging information and ideas with their Thai opposite numbers after their return to Australia. This co-operation stemmed from the close links that had long existed between these two bodies, partly because the post of manager of the Lignite Authority was held for many years by a former Commission officer.

Post-mission contact of this kind was undoubtedly worth fostering. Furthermore, nearly all the experts approached indicated that they would have been willing to make their services available in an advisory capacity during the follow-up phase if they had been asked to do so and had been informed how their projects were progressing. And many of them clearly felt that the stand-offish attitude of the authorities was largely responsible for more not having been done. As one critic previously in the Philippines bluntly put it:

I would not waste my time on future missions unless there was some guarantee of follow-up reporting on results achieved (if any), and I hope you can correct this frustrating situation in the report of your Enquiry. When one undertakes a mission with some missionary zeal, it is hurtful to hear nothing more. I can understand the Philippines people who are notoriously casual in their communication but I feel that the Department of External Affairs could develop more of a partnership approach towards their 'experts' by providing results of missions.

The author of this comment was chiefly offended at having been told nothing, but others went further and implied that they should have been consulted into the bargain. Such was the view expressed by the expert whose job had been to advise on the suitability of planting native Australian trees. His mission lasted only three months—much too short to determine how far different species of trees might be expected to flourish under tropical conditions. Because of the nature of the project, it would have been extremely useful in his opinion had he subsequently been sent progress reports on how the seedlings he had planted were standing up to the local soil and climate, and been asked for his comments. But this had not been done.

A fourth way of participating—really an extension of the third—is for

the Australian government to enter into arrangements with host countries for experts to make one or more follow-up visits to their former projects. This was suggested to us by a number of people and warrants sympathetic consideration. Some favoured it as the most effective way of ensuring that progress was properly evaluated. Others emphasised the fact that projects needed servicing from time to time because of staff turnover: replacements must be given the opportunity their predecessors had of benefiting from direct contact with experts.

Although there are instances in the past of experts being officially sponsored to return to their projects to advise, evaluate or carry out further training, they are few and far between. Those who revisited their projects most commonly did so in a private capacity in the course of an overseas trip, but in such cases they were usually there only as observers. The occasional exception involved employees of organisations like CSIRO and the Australian Broadcasting Commission with affiliations abroad. Such organisations sometimes made special arrangements for a member of staff, while on other business overseas, to call on a sister establishment to which he or one of his colleagues was formerly attached as an expert; and local officers, forewarned of his coming, were able to take full advantage of the occasion to consult with him.

While the experts with whom we broached the subject were for the most part in favour of follow-up visits—at least as applied to certain types of missions—fear was at times expressed that recipient countries might regard such visits as outside meddling in their domestic affairs and thus be reluctant to approve. This would not necessarily be so, however, if countries were approached about the matter in the right way; it might be judicious, for example, to stress the servicing aspect of such visits rather than the evaluation aspect.

A final way in which the Australian government can participate actively in the work of follow up is to support projects with additional aid. In a sense, of course, follow-up visits by experts fall into this category, but we are thinking rather of additional assistance in the form of providing a replacement when an expert retires, extending capital aid for longer than originally intended, and arranging for local personnel connected with a project to come to Australia for training or experience.

Whatever the nature and purpose of post-mission aid, the official request for it must come from the host government. But there is nothing to prevent the Australian authorities taking the lead by indicating how they are prepared to help and what they think ought to be done, provided matters are handled tactfully. Moreover, experts themselves are usually well placed while still on the job to draw attention to the aid they would like to see the host country ask for after they leave. In the past this has

proved one of the most effective means of maintaining continuity of assistance.

Post-evaluation and Future Guidelines

Lastly, aid-giving authorities have a responsibility to ensure that the lessons learned in planning and executing a particular mission are fully taken into account, in conjunction with what has already been learned from earlier missions, when it comes to planning and executing subsequent technical assistance operations. Decisions regularly have to be made on such matters as the choice and timing of assignments, recruitment, capital equipment, and post-mission participation; and if a body of material bearing on issues of this kind and drawn from actual experience is readily accessible, the authorities will be in a better position to arrive at sound decisions.

We have had occasion to refer once or twice in our report to ways in which the handling of aid tended to improve over the years under investigation. However, in view of the fact that the Colombo Plan and U.N. authorities were almost totally inexperienced in matters of technical assistance twenty years ago, some degree of improvement could hardly have failed to occur in the succeeding years. The significant question is whether the progress achieved would have been greater still had more effort been made to analyse past performance, and our answer unfortunately must be in the affirmative.

In order to carry out this final task, the first thing the authorities should have done was to familiarise themselves with any features of a completed mission that were likely to prove useful in the planning or execution of later technical assistance work, especially with those features accounting for the mission's success or failure. That this aspect of post-evaluation was not in practice accorded the attention it warranted may be deduced from our earlier comments about the need for greater emphasis on fact-finding. For unless terminal reports are carefully read, debriefing sessions fully utilised, and a watchful eye kept on post-mission progress, the authorities will hardly be in a position to undertake proper post-evaluation.

The second thing the authorities should have done was to integrate the conclusions drawn from individual missions into an overall body of principles capable of serving as guidelines for future policy, continually modifying these principles as further missions were completed and new information came to light. In this respect, too, the authorities have been remiss. Indeed, it was largely the fact that so little seemed to be known about Australian technical assistance that prompted us to conduct this inquiry.

Conclusions

The individual parts which go to make up technical assistance operations have now been examined; and one way of rounding off our report would be to try to estimate the net amount of good that has been achieved by sending Australian experts abroad. But the incomplete coverage of our questionnaire, the essentially qualitative character of a great deal of the data, and countless problems of measurement, make this a hopeless undertaking. Even were it possible, we should still not be in a position to judge whether the share of aid devoted to experts ought to be adjusted, unless we first applied similar cost-benefit analysis to other forms of aid as a means of comparison.

However, if the Commonwealth government plans to persevere with overseas assignments over the next few years, as we imagine it does, then the really vital thing is to ensure that what is done is done as effectively as possible. And although we believe that the sending of experts to Asia under the Colombo Plan has on balance been worth while, the previous chapters are punctuated with suggestions for improvement. But the references are scattered and need tying together in some fashion. So let us conclude by drawing attention to certain important features of our recommendations.

First, our suggestions are almost invariably directed to the Australian authorities rather than to host governments. Our aim from the outset, as pointed out in Chapter 1, was to inquire into the efficacy of one aspect of Australian aid—the sending of experts to Asia on technical assistance missions—and not to conduct a general review of aid problems as seen through Asian eyes, with the experience of Australian experts merely serving as a case study. We thought of ourselves as addressing primarily an Australian audience on matters about which we believed Australia could and should be doing something. Moreover, because of the character of our study, we inevitably ended up learning a good deal more about Australian aid administration and its defects than about the machinery employed by host nations for handling the receipt of aid.

Even so, there can be no question that the quality of technical assistance depends in substantial degree on host nations; and although our

remarks are not primarily addressed to them, they are very much involved by implication in those of our recommendations advocating that the Australian authorities do more to see that recipient governments organise their side of things properly. We have suggested, for example, that External Affairs take a firmer line at the negotiating stage on job descriptions (p. 68), counterpart arrangements (p. 89), local financial support (p. 103), and prior consultation between host country bodies with a possible stake in proceedings (p. 102); and subsequently maintain a closer watch to ensure that the measures agreed to are actually carried out (pp. 78, 111-12, 163).

A second point about our proposals is that quite a number of them are submitted tentatively as measures worth thinking about but warranting further investigation before any action is taken. This is true, for instance, of what is said in the recruitment chapter on basic technical assistance agreements (p. 54), associate experts (pp. 54-6), a career service (pp. 56-7), and sisterhood schemes (pp. 59-60). It also applies to formal orientation sessions for recruits (pp. 69-71), and the preparation of written material to assist briefing (pp. 69, 71, 146). Again, sending team leaders ahead of the main party (p. 79), exploratory visits by experts several months before taking up duties (pp. 79-80), treating the first few months of lengthy missions as a trial period (p. 134), and follow-up visits by experts (pp. 164-5)—these are put forward as potentially useful courses of action rather than as ready-made solutions. What we ask is that such proposals be carefully and systematically examined by those in charge of Australia's foreign aid program, even if in the end some of them may have to be rejected as unworkable.

Thirdly, a feature nearly all our recommendations have in common is that they are designed to rectify what are basically sins of *omission* on the Australian government's part, not sins of *commission*. This is true not only of the various proposals already listed but also of such others as the circulation of a shopping list of available expertise (pp. 39-40), increasing the support given to voluntary aid groups (p. 56), creating greater public interest in service overseas (pp. 60-1), putting recruits in touch with those who may be able to advise them (pp. 69, 79), seeing that adequate health precautions are taken (pp. 142-3), and making sure that the conclusions to be drawn from completed missions are adequately considered in planning future projects and setting guidelines for policy (p. 166). There are two major exceptions. The first has to do with the rule that gifts of capital must have a factor content at least two-thirds Australian. This represents deliberate policy on the Australian government's part but is something we should like to see modified in the interests of more efficient and speedier equipment procurement (p. 123). The second excep-

tion relates to the tendency for assistance to be spread thinly over a miscellaneous array of small-scale undertakings. To some extent no doubt this tendency (which, admittedly, is less conspicuous today than it used to be) is simply a manifestation of the fact that the Australian authorities have not maintained close enough contact with local officials and not been sufficiently thorough in the initial vetting of requests: they have, in other words, left undone certain things that ought to have been done. But in part it has probably been intentional, an aspect of Australian political strategy in Asia linked with the notion that giving host countries what they ask for is good diplomacy. In so far as this is so, our advocacy of greater aid in depth (pp. 40-1), and the feeling we have that aid-giving should be firmly based on the economic needs of the developing countries, imply dissatisfaction with a positive element in the Australian government's approach to aid.

Fourthly, the implementation of several of our proposals would have the effect of taking some of the strain off Australian aid officials, either by shifting work to somebody else¹ or by streamlining administration.² But for the most part the adoption of our recommendations would have the effect of increasing the aid authorities' work-load both in Canberra and overseas. This in turn raises the issue rather glossed over in earlier chapters of what should be done to strengthen Australia's aid machinery. At this point a further feature of our proposals must be mentioned: the time factor.

Our thoughts on aid questions, and hence our views on reform, largely derive from what we learned in conducting our survey in 1964-5 and to that extent refer to problems as they appeared four or five years ago. The reason for stressing this is that in the intervening period important changes have occurred in Australian aid administration. In 1964 an inter-departmental committee was set up to review the foreign aid program, and the results of its deliberations were embodied in a confidential report issued in March 1965. The contents of the report have never been made public, but not long afterwards the formal structure of the External Aid Branch (until then known as the Economic and Technical Assistance Branch) was overhauled and a new Policy Section created.³ This reorganisation

¹ For example, the setting up of advisory panels to assist with vetting of requests (p. 30) and with recruitment (p. 59); and making use of ASPAC's Registry of Experts' Services (pp. 39-40).

² Establishing supernumerary posts in government departments to facilitate public service recruitment (p. 59) is one such instance; more flexible financial procedures (p. 122) is another.

³ Among other things, the Policy Section collects and collates statistics on aid, deals with questions in Parliament, and handles matters arising out of Australia's membership of DAC.

was accompanied by two further developments and these are what chiefly interest us. In the first place, the Project Section which is responsible for experts and equipment (both for capital development and technical assistance) was considerably enlarged, its strength being raised in December 1966 from an establishment of nine to the present figure of seventeen; other parts of the Branch were also expanded. Secondly, staffing policy was amended in a crucial respect. Instead of entrusting the management of Australia's aid program almost wholly to career diplomats as had been the practice until then, the government now began to recruit administrative officers specifically for the job. Up to date this has proceeded furthest at the Australian end. The position of assistant secretary in charge of the Branch is now occupied by a former officer of the National Capital Development Commission, and only two of the hundred or so staff under him belong to the diplomatic wing of External Affairs. Things have not changed quite as much yet at the embassies, although more junior administrative personnel than formerly are assisting on the aid side (mainly dealing with students and trainees seeking admission to Australia), and two fairly senior aid posts have recently been created in Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok.

These are welcome developments, and because of them some of our criticisms based on the questionnaire findings probably have less force today than five or ten years ago. We should hasten to add, nevertheless, that most of the problems identified in our report are to greater or lesser extent still relevant today, and our recommendations have been framed accordingly. Furthermore, it is debatable whether either of the changes mentioned in the last paragraph goes far enough. The increase in establishment at the end of 1966 helped to meet a staff problem of almost crisis proportions at a time when the Branch had just been saddled with several additional responsibilities.⁴ But the increase was disappointing in several respects:

(i) It made inadequate allowance for the particularly rapid growth in the volume of aid about to occur and the extra demands this would place on the Branch's resources. Some idea of the mounting pressure can be gained from the fact that in 1967-8 there were 145 Colombo Plan experts to be looked after compared with 85 two years earlier.

(ii) Overall establishment figures hide the fact that extra posts were concentrated in the lower ranks. Senior officers were still left carrying a very heavy load, and this has effectively prevented them from giving sufficient attention to possible ways of improving administration. (There

⁴ These included the handling of DAC business and SEATO aid.

is a similar problem at the embassy end: the Branch is most anxious to extend the number of senior aid posts in Asia.)

(iii) As already indicated, our own proposals would on balance mean considerable extra work for aid authorities—much more than the present enlarged establishment could conceivably cope with.

The change to employing non-diplomats can also be criticised as not going far enough, since it still locates aid *policy* firmly within the Department of External Affairs even though aid *administration* may no longer be primarily in the hands of diplomats. As long as the External Aid Branch remains attached to External Affairs, and thus subject to directives and pressure from a minister and senior departmental advisers whose thinking on aid represents very much the diplomat's view, Australia will probably continue to pay too much attention to the goodwill aspect of projects and too little to what is judged to be in the economic interests of recipient countries.

A step favoured by some critics is to take aid completely out of the hands of External Affairs and either set up a new Commonwealth department along the lines of Britain's Ministry of Overseas Development or transfer control to an existing department—to the recently established Department of Education and Science, for example.

Nevertheless, in one respect at least it may be wise to leave the External Aid Branch where it now is. If foreign aid is to hold its own against the many competing claims on the public purse from other quarters, it needs an influential voice to represent it in Cabinet and at interdepartmental meetings. And the Minister for External Affairs and his senior advisers are much better placed to be effective spokesmen than their opposite numbers in a new and small department. It is not simply a matter of size and traditional standing, although these are certainly important considerations. Also deeply ingrained in the minds of politicians and public servants is the notion that public money should only be spent if the expenditure can be shown to be in the national interest. To secure funds for foreign aid, it is therefore important to be able to demonstrate a clear connecting link between aid and national interest. Now External Affairs is certainly in a better position than other departments to do this in that aid, in so far as it affects the national interest at all, does so most directly in the area of international political relations.

A compromise solution would be to convert the External Aid Branch into a statutory corporation, which Canada is currently in the process of doing with its External Aid Office. As a corporation it could still be represented in Cabinet by the Minister for External Affairs.

We personally favour aid on humanitarian grounds, as was pointed out at the end of Chapter 1, and are prepared to say so openly. But if the

only way of ensuring adequate funds for this purpose is to have External Affairs arguing the case for aid on grounds of diplomacy and national interest, we should perhaps not be too fussy about motives. What all this seems to add up to is that a thorough government reappraisal of aid policy and all its ramifications is unlikely unless the Australian community that votes governments into office constitutes itself into a sufficiently powerful and informed pressure group in support of change; and this cannot be expected to happen unless the government itself does more to publicise its aid program. Our report will have served a worthwhile purpose, then, if it helps in some small measure to break this apparent deadlock by acquainting the public with what has been going on and what remains to be done or if it stirs those in authority to question their own principles and practices.

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