

Minister visits Guinea and Gabon

Pierre De Bané, Minister of Regional Economic Expansion and Adviser to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mark MacGuigan on Francophone Affairs, visited Guinea and Gabon last month.

Mr. De Bané led a delegation consisting of representatives of the Department of External Affairs; the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce; the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA); and the Department of Regional Economic Expansion. In Guinea the minister held talks with President Sékou Touré and senior ministers of the Guinean government. They examined ways of strengthening and broadening co-operation between Canada and Guinea at both the bilateral and multilateral levels.

The visit to Gabon was marked by the meeting, June 10-12, of the Canada-Gabon bilateral commission, created in October 1980 during the official visit to Canada of Louis Gaston Mayila, Secretary-General of the government of Gabon. Mr. De Bané headed the Canadian delegation to the meeting. The commission is responsible for analyzing aspects of co-operation between the two countries and establishing means of implementing them. The minister also met with President Omar Bongo and Gabonese government officials.

Methane gas project starts

Three Canadian companies have begun a project to capture methane gas from coal mines in Cape Breton and make it available for commercial use.

Algas Resources Limited, a subsidiary of Nova Corporation of Alberta, Petro-Canada Exploration Incorporated and the Cape Breton Development Corporation (Devco), are involved in the venture.

The methane gas is normally vented from the mines to prevent explosions. The corporations estimate that the mines will produce at least 141,000 cubic metres of gas daily.

The \$500,000 cost of the current phase of the project — bringing the system into operation — is being provided by Algas and Petro-Canada. Once the operation becomes commercial, Devco, owner of the mines, becomes a 50 per cent participant, with the other two companies holding the other 50 per cent.

Canada at World Food Council

The real solution to the world food problem is more reliable food production in individual countries, Agriculture Minister Eugene Whelan told the World Food Council (WFC) at its recent meeting in Novi Sad, Yugoslavia.



Agriculture Minister Eugene Whelan

Strong national food industries, rather than dependence on international bodies and special arrangements, are the basis of world food security, Mr. Whelan said in an intervention at the seventh ministerial meeting of the 36-member world body.

"The first test of any emerging nation's real sovereignty is food sovereignty," he said. "When we have stronger member nations we can be more successful in negotiating improvements to the international food trade environment."

Mr. Whelan said a special parliamentary task force in Canada had stressed agricultural development, energy and human resources as the world's first priorities for the decade.

He said the emphasis of some international agencies on "some elusive formula" to solve world problems had diverted attention from the real solution of greater national self-reliance. He expressed reservations about relying too heavily on food aid.

"I have no quarrel with those who argue for the need for a better international food trade environment, better trading links, better world production and more efficient distribution systems,"

he said.

But he argued that it should not be a first priority. He called for more emphasis on self-help and nations helping each other implement national food strategies.

"Canada's enthusiasm for the food strategy approach is a manifestation of our faith in a return to the basics of agricultural development assistance."

Canada has a special \$2-million fund to assist in establishing food sector strategies in developing countries. Discussions are under way with a number of countries including Benin, Morocco and Jamaica.

Mr. Whelan said Canada remained committed to food aid and this year had increased its aid by 11 per cent to \$200 million.

Malawi railway funded

Canada and Malawi have signed an agreement for \$7.6 million to go towards the completion of the Malawi railway, which has been under construction since 1971.

Secretary of State for External Affairs Mark MacGuigan and the Honourable D.T. Matenje, who headed a Malawian delegation to Ottawa, signed the final amendments to agreements for cost-sharing between Canada and Malawi.

This brings to \$89,024,000 the amount which the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has contributed to the project. The government of Malawi has contributed \$21,404,000, bringing the over-all project cost to approximately \$110,665,000.

The second phase of the project is expected to be completed within a few months, with the official opening of the railway scheduled for the end of 1981.

The emphasis of the Canadian aid program since 1973 has been on improving Malawi's railway system in order to connect it with neighbouring countries and to enable the shipment of export crops including tobacco, tea, sugar, maize and rice.

The railway project consists of the design and construction of 130 miles of railway line. The project has employed an average of 1,500 full-time personnel including 17 Canadians. In addition to the provision of personnel, materials and equipment for the rehabilitation and construction of rail lines, the CIDA contribution has also provided training to Malawi railway personnel.