
Coast Guard icebreaker rounds North America

Bagpipes, a crowd of well-wishers and bonuses for the crew greeted the *Louis St. Laurent*, queen of the Canadian Coast Guard's icebreakers, on its return to Halifax recently after circumnavigating the North American continent.

At one point in the voyage of more than four months, the *Louis* rescued another modern Coast Guard icebreaker, the *Franklin*, which was trapped in heavy Arctic ice.

The feat, carried out in multi-year polar ice up to 14 feet thick, was honoured in a ceremony after the *Louis* arrived at the Coast Guard base in Halifax.

It was "the heaviest ice I have had to work a ship in", said Captain George Burdock, master of the *St. Laurent*.

Robert Howie, federal Minister of State for Transportation, presented Captain Burdock a merit award for the rescue, along with an engraved silver tray and a cheque for \$1,000. Each crew member will also receive a \$100 bonus.

The rescue took place in Viscount Melville Sound near the entrance to McClure Strait.

Within 80 kilometres of the stricken *Franklin*, the *St. Laurent* was progressing at only one mile an hour and "we could have suffered the same fate as the *Franklin*", said Captain Burdock.

The *St. Laurent* damaged its starboard side but managed to reach the *Franklin*, which was solidly locked in ice. In a ten-hour icebreaking operation, the *St. Laurent* freed the *Franklin* by steaming a figure-eight around it. The damaged ship then followed in the westward trail behind the *St. Laurent*.

Canadian cable TV in U.S.

Canadian cable TV companies, which got their head-start pulling in American television signals for viewers to the north, are now homing in on a totally new market — the United States — reports Andrew Malcolm in the *New York Times*, November 12.

Lured by the expanding American cable TV industry and armed with almost three decades of experience, the Canadian concerns have made significant penetrations in recent months in diverse cable areas from California to New Jersey, says

Mr. Malcolm.

In October, Canadian Cablesystems scored a coup by winning the cable franchise for the city of Minneapolis against American competitor from Time Inc., Storer Broadcasting and Warner Cable. Now Canadian-American competition is heating up in southern California and Portland, Oregon, which has just requested franchise bids, he says.

Huge growth market

"The United States is attractive to Canadian cable companies for the same reason it's attractive to American companies," Barry Gage, president of Maclean-Hunter Cable TV Ltd., said. "There's a huge growth market down there." With Canada's major markets virtually saturated with cable coverage, the logical place for growth is to the south, a theme developing in many Canadian industries.

Canadian cable executives point out that in Toronto cable markets are already highly developed. Attracted by cable's quality reception of the American networks, 74 per cent of Canada's 7.2 million TV households have access to cable TV. More than 50 per cent subscribe, compared with 20 per cent in the United States. This has created a Canadian cable TV industry with more than 5,200 employees in 400 companies with gross operating revenues last year of \$271.5 million and after-tax profits of \$27.9 million.

According to Randy Nichols of the U.S. Federal Communications Commission's Cable Bureau, there are no figures on foreign ownership among the 3,600 cable companies that operate 9,000 cable systems in the United States. His feeling, he said, was that such foreign ownership was insignificant, although growing, and that virtually all of it was Canadian.

Expansion in Jersey

Maclean-Hunter, a Canadian communications conglomerate with 1978 revenues of \$230 million, bought into New Jersey's Suburban Cablevision four years ago. It now owns 84.5 per cent of the company.

At present, it has 41 cable franchises with 65,000 subscribers in Essex, Union, Middlesex and Hudson counties. Within three years, however, Maclean-Hunter, which has 285,000 Canadian subscribers, expects to sign up at least half the 350,000 households in the area. In addition, under the names of Metro Cablevision and Wayne Cablevision, Maclean-

Hunter has recently won the franchises for eight suburbs in the Detroit area where it also runs a pay-TV operation.

From Vancouver earlier this year, Premier Cablevision Ltd. moved to buy 50 per cent of California Satellite Systems Inc., a pay-TV operation with 37,000 subscribers in Sacramento. A similar system called Northwest Entertainment Inc., also half Canadian-owned, will soon begin broadcasting in Stockton, California, Portland, Oregon and Seattle.

Last January, Rogers Telecommunications of Toronto consolidated its control of several Canadian cable concerns, including Canadian Cablesystems, to become Canada's largest with 700,000 subscribers. The largest American cable system has 125,000 subscribers while the average system has 10,000. Canadian Cablesystems offered to buy control of Premier for \$20 a share, potentially a \$66-million deal. It requires government approval.

Refugee loans program changed

Employment and Immigration Minister Ron Atkey has approved changes to the federal program which makes transportation loans available to refugees resettling in Canada.

The changes, which are retroactive to the beginning of 1979, are designed to lessen the financial burden on Indo-Chinese refugees coming to Canada under the current relocation program, said the Minister.

Under the amended system, the maximum repayable transportation cost is \$750 for each adult, \$375 for each child and \$75 for each infant. In addition, these ceilings will now cover all transportation costs to the refugee's final destination, including the trans-oceanic flight and any inland travel required to get the refugee from the staging area to the resettlement community.

Previously, inland travel was calculated separately and costs to the refugee could vary considerably, depending on the distance between the staging area and the final destination.

"Standardized costs are not only more equitable to the refugees, but help our officers in counselling them to go to the community most suitable — without being concerned about possible financial consequences for the family," Mr. Atkey said.