

## Energy main topic of First Ministers' meeting

Provincial premiers returned home recently after their twentieth annual meeting held in Pointe-au-Pic, Quebec, from August 15-18.

While energy and the economy were the main topics of discussion during the three-day meeting, the ten provincial premiers also took stock of plans for constitutional revision and discussed health programs, duplication of government services and interprovincial trucking.

Nova Scotia's John Buchanan led off the discussions on energy and industrial development, while Ontario's William Davis opened the talks on employment and inflation.

In their final *communiqué* the provincial leaders called on federal Finance Minister John Crosbie to convene a federal-provincial finance ministers' conference before drawing up his budget this autumn. The premiers specifically asked to be consulted in Bank of Canada discussions leading to a change in interest rates such as the bank rate increase announced on July 22. They also asked for a louder voice in setting policies to deal with inflation, unemployment, the international deficit and the value of the dollar.

Prime Minister Joe Clark met with Quebec premier René Lévesque on August 20 to discuss the outcome of the premiers' conference. Mr. Clark's two-hour private dinner with the premier was preceded by an afternoon session with a group of prominent businessmen. The Prime Minister was accompanied by Industry Minister Robert René de Cotret and Supply and Services Minister Roch LaSalle. The dinner with Mr. Lévesque, who acted as host and chairman of the provincial leaders' meeting, marked the first time the two leaders had met since Mr. Clark's election.

The Prime Minister, in a letter to the provincial premiers, July 26, proposed a three-day federal-provincial meeting in November "to discuss questions relating to the supply, conservation and pricing of energy, the economy in general, and ways and means of improving relations and co-operation between [their] governments".

In particular, Mr. Clark said the talks should emphasize ways of providing more cost-effective service to the public and eliminating duplication of services. "In addition," said the Prime Minister, "I

am expecting that our ministers concerned with constitutional matters will be meeting in the course of the fall and there may be items which they will wish to refer to First Ministers for consideration."

Mr. Clark also indicated that plans were under way for a national economic conference "which will provide a forum for representatives of the private sector and of the federal and provincial governments to begin work on strengthening the economy".



René Lévesque meets with Prime Minister Clark (right) after the provincial premiers' conference last month.

Jacques Grenier

## Canada-Israel joint project

Canada and Israel will assist the Dominican Republic to build a major dairy farm settlement during the next five years.

Canada expects to spend up to \$3 million on the project, mostly on dairy equipment and Holstein cattle while Israel, which has years of agricultural experience in arid zones, will provide most of the expertise.

The dairy farm project will be an extension of an Israeli settlement program, a blend of private and co-operative activities, begun nine years ago in an arid area of the Dominican Republic.

The Israelis helped settle about 500 Dominican families in the area and taught them irrigation and farming techniques for this type of desert agriculture.

The objective of the project is to establish 170 additional families in the Azua Valley who would become involved in milk production and processing.

The project will create employment opportunities, optimize the use of arable irrigated land by developing fodder production, establish a marketing system and help integrate the people of the Azua Valley into the social and economic development of the Dominican Republic.

The Dominican Republic will provide infrastructure and housing as its contribution to the project.

Canada recently participated in a project in the Dominican Republic to upgrade rural living conditions by extending electrical service to about 140,000 people in 160 outlying communities. Canada's contribution to the project was a \$7.5-million loan administered by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

Canada is also contributing \$2.9 million to a \$137-million irrigation and flood control scheme designed by the IDB to recover 50,000 hectares of parched land in the Savana Yegua River basin area of the Dominican Republic.

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## Royal Canadian Mint to market new gold coin

The Royal Canadian Mint has chosen two banks in Canada and six blue-chip foreign banks and bullion dealers to act as distributors for a Canadian gold bullion coin, soon to be issued.

The one-ounce gold coins are expected to be sold on domestic and overseas markets by September. They will be marketed as high-quality investment vehicles rather than as collectors' items.

The outlets in Canada will be the Bank of Nova Scotia and the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce. Distributors in the United States include J. Aron and Co., Mocatta Metals Ltd. and Republic National Bank, while European distribution will be handled by Deutsche Bank, Dresdner Bank and Swiss Bank Corp.

Canada is expected to mint five million one-ounce gold coins over the next three years, including one million this year. The coins are to be priced competitively with the South African krugerrand, so that the premium over the gold value will probably be no more than about 3 per cent.