

News Briefs

Canada Signs Common Fund Agreement

Canada has signed the international agreement establishing a common fund for commodities, Secretary of State for External Affairs Mark MacGuigan and Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce Herb Gray announced.

The \$750-million fund will be set up to finance international commodity agreements which have commodity buffer stocks to enhance market price stability. The fund will also finance commodity development measures, such as research and market promotion, with the aim of improving the long-term competitiveness of various commodities.

The Common Fund, the result of four years of negotiation, is regarded as a key element in the North-South dialogue, especially by the developing nations which view it as a test of the developed nations' commitment to international change. The signing of the agreement is an indication of Canada's support of the on-going process of the dialogue between developed and developing countries.

CIDA is Changing Course

Canada's foreign aid program has changed direction to better serve the social values of people in developing countries.

The new president of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Marcel Masse, believes in investing in things like technical schools, which will have an impact on the views, attitudes, and levels of education and management skills of people, instead of building an infrastructure of ports, dams and transport, which so often in the past has been inappropriate.

In recent years, CIDA has diverted increasing aid toward the poorest countries and away from the so-called middle-income countries, as well as directing more through multilateral agencies. Mr. Masse thinks both policies are sound but he wants more bilateral aid spent on projects helping people acquire skills and training while taking account of local traditions rather than importing western development concepts and values.

Assistance to Bangladesh Rail

A team of advisers from Canadian Pacific Consulting Services Limited of Montreal, Quebec, is providing technical assistance through a \$5.1 million CIDA-funded project aimed at helping Bangladesh Railways raise the service availability of

its diesel electric locomotives to about 85 per cent from the present 65 per cent.

Over the next five years, the team will provide a total of some 33 man years of services in close co-operation with counterparts in the railways to develop a program of preventative maintenance for the locomotives, help staff upgrade their skills, and extend the improved stores and inventory system already established with Canadian assistance at the railway's Dacca, workshop.

Korean Contract to Northern Telecom

Northern Telecom Canada Ltd. of Mississauga, Ontario, a subsidiary of Northern Telecom Ltd. of Montreal, has announced a contract for the sale of \$60 million worth of telecommunications equipment to South Korea.

The contract is for the provision of digital transmission equipment for the improvement and expansion of South Korea's telephone network. Deliveries are expected to span an 18-month period, starting before the end of 1981.

The equipment will be manufactured by Northern Telecom Canada in its Aylmer, Quebec, and Winnipeg, Manitoba, plants.

IDRC Turns Ten

A public lecture on "Rural Development: New Directions in Southeast Asia" was given to mark the 10th anniversary of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) celebrated at its Asia Regional Office in Singapore on February 27. The speaker was Dr. Somsakdi Xuto, Minister attached to the Thailand Prime Minister's Office in Bangkok.

The Canadian-based IDRC, which was established by the Parliament of Canada, was the first organization ever set up specifically to support research projects that are identified, designed, conducted, and managed by researchers from and in developing countries, in terms of their own priorities.

Voice Box Made in Canada

An artificial voice box has been developed by Canadian medical researcher John Frederickson in conjunction with the University of Toronto Biomedical Instrumentation Development Unit.

It is a stainless steel disc that is implanted at the back of the throat. One of the faces of the disc, which is 3.5 centimetres in diameter, is as taut as a drumhead and vibrates in response to an externally generated electrical signal from a battery pack carried in the user's pocket. The vibrating disc sends a tone up the

user's throat to where the mouth shapes the sound in the usual way into comprehensible speech.

A year's testing of the device, which weighs about 30 grams and is only five millimetres thick, has begun though testing in 1978 of a larger prototype proved successful but for the drawback of its size.

Canada-Asean Bilateral Tax Treaties

Canadian Minister of Finance Allan MacEachen recently announced that bilateral tax treaties are now in force with Indonesia and Malaysia. Canada already had double taxation agreements with Singapore and the Philippines.

Help to Solve Oil Shortage

A new corporation, Petro-Canada International, will be created for the purpose of exploration in developing countries in an effort to help solve these countries' and the world's oil shortage problem. This initiative has been allocated \$250 million under Canada's National Energy Program.

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