

MACKENZIE DELTA TASK FORCE REPORT

Some of the key recommendations of the Mackenzie Delta task force on conservation are already being implemented, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Mr. Jean Chrétien, said recently. The report, as presented to the Department, was released by the Minister at the end of June.

The ten-man task force, composed of conservation, university and industry representatives, was commissioned by the Minister to report on the possibility of environmental disturbances arising from industrial development in the North — especially from oil and gas geophysical and drilling operations.

Compiled after a five-day inspection tour of the Northwest Territories region last month, the report indicates that “development and conservation interests need not be diametrically opposed to each other but can work together to their mutual benefit and to the benefit of all Canadians”.

The group reported some damage to the environment but concluded tentatively that it was slight. Further inspection trips will be needed to study the environment at different seasons. The group did report, however, that the representatives of oil companies in the area were aware of the need to consider environmental aspects, and opined that “frank dialogue” with industry would go a long way toward solving problems.

Mr. Chrétien said that field organizations were already being developed to administer and enforce proposed land-use regulations in areas of industrial activity. The regulations, to be made in accordance with amendments to the Territorial Lands Act, will be promulgated as soon as possible, he added. As the task force suggests, the regulations will be continually under review, “and will be subject to change in the light of information received from the task force...or from other sources”.

The Department's land-use staff also will take on the job of identifying and protecting “special reserve” areas which have particular ecological, biological, archeological, geographical, geological or historical importance that should be left undisturbed.

SECOND TRIP SOON

The task force report stated that the timing of the trip was such that a follow-up inspection trip would be necessary this summer to observe the effect of winter operations on the land after the ground surface had thawed.

Mr. Chrétien agreed, and said that departmental officials were preparing for another trip and that the “willing participation of natural scientists in the task force has served to demonstrate to industry the very real assistance they can obtain from this group in the execution of their own economically-oriented endeavours”.

In announcing the programs for the maintenance of the environment, Mr. Chrétien said development of

the North “must not leave behind it a trail of unsightly scars”. He stressed that regulations to protect the environment “would not be so stringent as to discourage industry and developers in the North”. And, according to the task force report, the oil companies are making “considerable efforts in adapting their operations to Northern conditions in the interests of good conservation practices”.

Formation of the Mackenzie Delta task force was announced by Mr. Chrétien in May, as part of a four-point program on Northern conservation which includes: a \$500,000-Arctic Land Use Research (ALUR) Program; Northern Land Use Regulations; and Summer Trials of Track Vehicles.

SYMPOSIUM ON DRUG USERS

National Health and Welfare Minister John Munro has announced approval of a \$15,000-Federal Government grant to the Canadian Hospital Association to support a national symposium on hospital handling of drug-users.

“The proposal...to hold this symposium has considerable merit and is most timely,” Mr. Munro said. The Department of National Health and Welfare is pleased to assist the Association in this endeavour.”

“I should hope the symposium would try to examine the problems of drug users within the total context of the situation, and that health agencies outside the hospital field be invited to participate in the program.”

The problems faced by hospitals trying to deal with cases of drug intoxication and addiction will be examined in papers and group studies. It is hoped that hospital policies, methods and routines for understanding, handling and treating drug addicts — particularly the youth group users — will be established.

The place and date of the symposium have not yet been announced.

AGRICULTURE POLICY

Canadian agriculture has six basic policy alternatives or combinations of alternatives to choose from, says Dr. Glenn Purnell, Director General of the Canada Department of Agriculture's Economics Branch.

These are: to balance resources within agriculture and to balance total agricultural resources with the rest of the economy; to stabilize farm family income; to equalize income within agriculture; to provide a safe, adequate supply of wholesome, high-quality food to meet the total demand of the domestic and foreign market and foreign aid commitments of Canada; to withdraw controls at all levels and allow a free market economy to operate in agriculture; and to include agriculture in the general policy fight against inflation.