

Commonwealth Day marked

Canada marked Commonwealth Day, March 9, with a number of events both official and non-governmental.

It was the fifth consecutive year in which Canada celebrated Commonwealth Day. Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau proposed observance of a Commonwealth Day at the 1975 Heads of Government Meeting held in Kingston, Jamaica and it was accepted by fellow Heads of Government.

Commonwealth Day is not a statutory holiday. Its observance is intended to emphasize to Canadians the importance of the Commonwealth and the value which Canada attaches to this association of 44 countries of all sizes, races and cultures.

Canadian schools, public libraries, numerous organizations and branches of the Royal Commonwealth Society were provided with Commonwealth Day posters and informational materials to assist in the events planned for the occasion.

A varied program of events was planned to mark Commonwealth Day in Canada, including public interfaith services held in Ottawa, Halifax, Vancouver, Victoria and Toronto under the auspices of the Royal Commonwealth Society.

Backyard gas wells

Some residents of southern Ontario can sit back and smile at rising homeheating costs resulting from increased prices of oil and gas.

Robert and Donna Sneddon of South Cayuga, 40 kilometres south of Hamilton are one such couple.

Since they bought their farm eight years ago, the Sneddons have had a free supply of natural gas from a natural gas well in their backyard.

Sneddon, 45, a farmer and steelworker and one of several rural homeowners in the area with gas wells, said maintenance is simple — walking across a field to his gas well once every two weeks and turning a valve to blow out any water in the well line.

"It takes about 20 minutes at the most," he said.

The Haldimand-Norfolk Region on Lake Erie may not be Alberta, but it is the oldest gas field in Ontario.

Exploration and drilling of new com-

mercial wells goes on, mainly offshore in Lake Erie during the summer, but the region's farmland is dotted with numerous low-production gas wells, some of which have been operating for 60 or 70 years.

In many cases, drilling began in the early part of the century when small groups of landowners banded together to put in a few wells.



Robert Sneddon checks his private backyard gas well.

Then oil and gas companies began putting wells into production, later selling them to landowners when commercial production was no longer profitable because of low volume.

Heats homes

For the homeowners, however, the wells produce enough to heat homes, operate cooking stoves and warm backyard swimming pools. Some tobacco farmers use them to dry their crops or heat greenhouses in the spring.

Real estate agent Bob Mann said the backyard gas wells are a selling point for homes although only about 10 to 15 per cent of the rural homes put up for sale have them.

Bruce Caughell, a 52-year-old farmer, said the wells that supply his home were drilled in 1944 and 1951. And he has heard that some wells which are still producing date back as far as 1908.

Progressive Conservative convention

More than 2,000 delegates attended the Progressive Conservative Party's national convention held recently in Ottawa.

A number of Conservative provincial premiers were among the delegates. The meeting was convened primarily to elect a new national party president and to vote on the question of a leadership convention.

Delegates vote on leadership

At each national convention the Progressive Conservative Party customarily calls for a vote by the delegates as to whether they wish their leader to continue or to hold a leadership convention. During this convention, delegates voted 34 per cent in favour of a leadership convention while the remainder voted to retain Joe Clark as their national party leader.

Mr. Clark was elected leader of the Progressive Conservative Party in 1976 at the age of 37, succeeding Robert Stanfield. The delegates also elected Montreal lawyer Peter Blaikie as the party's national president.

Convention next year

In his acceptance speech to the delegates, Mr. Blaikie promised a party convention before the end of next year and said he would be consulting party members across the country on their attitudes regarding the party leadership.

The convention delegates also discussed a number of social and energy questions. The party did not adopt a new direction in policy but endorsed positions defended in Parliament by the party "caucus".

Boucher strikes gold

Speed skater Gaetan Boucher of Ste. Foy, Quebec recently won a gold medal at the world speed skating championships held in Grenoble, France.

Boucher set a track record in the 1,000 metres with a winning time of 1:16.00. The previous mark of 1:17.49 was held by Sergei Khlebnikov of the Soviet Union. The Canadian skater was a silver medalist in the 1,000-metre sprint at the Winter Olympics last year in Lake Placid, New York.