

### Alberta oil reserves drop

Alberta's conventional crude oil reserves, representing the bulk of proved domestic oil supplies, declined by 255 million barrels in 1974, leaving less than 13 years' supply in the ground, at present rates of consumption, according to the Alberta Energy Resources Conservation Board. Alberta had 6.3 billion barrels of available oil supplies remaining at December 31, after producing 497 million last year.

The tabulations, which are expected to influence the current assessment of Canadian oil supplies and requirements by the National Energy Board, confirm unofficial estimates of falling oil reserves. Alberta government and petroleum industry officials regard 13 years as the minimum time needed to permit the development of alternative supply sources, whether conventional or synthetic.

### Two-price wheat payment

Agriculture Minister Eugene Whelan recently announced that a cheque for \$16.3 million had been sent to the Ontario Wheat Producers' Marketing Board as payment to farmers under the recently enacted "two-price wheat" legislation.

"The payment, which will be passed on to Ontario wheat growers with the final payment for their 1974 crop, is in fact a subsidy to consumers to keep down the price of bakery products," Mr. Whelan said.

Canadian millers buying Ontario wheat pay \$3.25 a bushel. Under this legislation the Federal Government is committed to paying producers the difference between this base price and the world price, up to a maximum payment of \$1.75 a bushel. The world price for wheat remained above \$5 a

bushel for most of the period when the 1974 wheat crop was sold.

The recent payment includes nearly \$790,000 in interest accumulated on this amount since the Ontario Wheat Producers' Marketing Board sold the wheat to millers.

"Without the two-price wheat agreement, millers would be paying more for wheat, and bread and bakery goods would cost more at the store," Mr. Whelan said.

### Happy as a pig

Sixteen porkers used as "guinea pigs" in experiments at Ottawa's Carleton University have probably proved that the drug methadone does not stimulate the consumption of alcohol.

The research, directed by psychologist Peter Fried, an associate professor, was undertaken to discover why so many heroin addicts turn to alcohol when they are weaned away from heroin by the use of methadone.

Eight animals were given injections of heroin, the other eight methadone, or a solution of salt and water. The drink of alcohol and apple juice that was made available to all the pigs was used mainly by the heroin addicts. When heroin was replaced by methadone, the animals drank less alcohol.

"We're fairly confident that an addict's drinking is not due to the introduction of methadone," Dr. Fried said. "It's related to something else — perhaps his background, his earlier life."

The professor believes that his findings should have the effect of lessening criticism of programs involving the use of methadone treatment.

### Scientific research and development

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cause of the time needed for transportation to the stores; hence there is a requirement for a more efficient means of preservation, a way of maintaining the meat's colour and preventing bacterial attack.

Of the several variables that might affect the preservation of meats, the investigators are particularly interested in the temperature and gaseous composition of the storage rooms and

gaseous composition in the packages. They are looking for a temperature and gas composition that will both inhibit bacterial growth and preserve the meat's attractive natural colour.

### Dulse-processing industry

. North America's first commercial seaweed cultivation unit began operations in November 1974 on Grand Manan Island, in the province of New Brunswick. It is part of a modern new seaweed processing plant operated by Atlantic Mariculture Ltd.

The cultivation unit represents the first commercial use of a technique developed over the years at the Atlantic Regional Laboratory's Sandy Cove Seaweed Culture Station. The thermal effluent from the Grand Manan power plant will be used to stimulate growth and extend the growing season to a year-round operation.

This plant marks the beginning of New Brunswick as a dulse processor and the beginning of seaweed as a secondary industry in Canada. (See *Canada Weekly* dated July 16, 1975, page 5.)

### Plastics

. With NRC support, research at the University of Toronto in polymer chemistry over the past five years has led to the development of numerous plastic products such as treated containers which decompose over a period of weeks by reaction with sunlight. Similar exposure to ordinary interior lighting produces no such degradation.

Although it was originally shown that polystyrene and polyethylene could degrade in this manner, subsequent experiments have proven that polyvinyl chloride, acrylate resins, nylon and polyesters could also react in a similar way.

Furthermore, it has been found that the initial photodegradation of polystyrene and polyethylene samples into small particles was followed by a biological degradation into carbon dioxide and water. In other words, the plastic material would break down to non-polluting volatile products.

Patents for the processes and compositions have been filed in 30 countries and commercial production of the Ecolyte (treated) polymers has begun in Canada and Europe.

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