

Revolutionary changes in telecommunication industry

In terms of distance, New Zealand and Canada are about as far apart as any two nations on earth. Yet they share a common language and cultural heritage, along with their Commonwealth membership. In telecommunications and information management, both countries face similar problems and opportunities which are part and parcel of the Information Age — an age which Alexander Graham Bell started in Canada.

Canada and New Zealand have, in the realm of telecommunications, both striking similarities and differences. The basic needs and provisioning situations are very common. Population density and skew are almost identical, as is the majority of the topography, ranging from rugged mountainous areas to flat agricultural farmlands, which places similar demands on rural communications.

As in Canada, the NZ population is very dependent on communications and increasingly demands improved service, and the ability to utilise the network for business and personal use in ways never before thought of. The use of value

added terminal attachments such as Personal Computers, Electronic Funds Transfer, Call Diversion units, etc., is increasing steadily. Cellular mobile radio and private mobile radio systems now offer the urban and rural businessman access to the telephone network, making the telephone a truly portable device.

Revolutionary

In recent years the telecommunications industry in Canada has seen revolutionary changes. Rapidly advancing technology — digital systems, fibre optics, cellular radio, stored programme control etc. — has changed telecommunications operating methods and standards as well as users' expectations.

There has been a trend, in evidence in a number of countries, towards 'privatisation' of telecommunications — a step which occurred in New Zealand in 1986 and in Canada has resulted in the structuring of telephone companies across Canada into market-driven enterprises promoting primarily the networks they have built. Areas such as PABX, residen-

tial telephones, data devices and mobile radio are in the realm of free enterprise, and open to competition from anyone. The telephone company is also in the competitive arena, promoting and selling devices which will increase the use of its network.

A comfortable compromise between total government monopoly and free enterprise has been reached. This compromise has resulted in increased network useage for the telephone company, increased opportunities for many small businesses producing high-technology devices and others providing non-network equipment, and finally, the public at large has been given the opportunity to use the full range of devices available to increase their style and ability to 'communicate'.

Links

Because of this commonality of demands on services, telecommunications leaders in both Canada and New Zealand, recognising the merit of collaborative effort and mutual assistance, have es-

Cont'd P24

Direct services stimulate trade

Somewhat akin to the chicken and the egg conundrum is the question of which comes first; a direct trade service between two countries or the trade itself. The New Zealand Minister of Overseas Trade and Marketing, Mr Mike Moore, is in no doubt that the establishment of direct transport services stimulates the development of trade.

This view is substantially supported by the visitors' book and official records at the Canadian Consulate in Auckland. In the six months following the resumption in November 1985 of Canadian Pacific Air Lines direct flights between Canada and Auckland, both Ontario and Quebec provinces have sent trade missions to New Zealand. Both reported 'lots of potential'

for trade between the two countries, so much so that Ontario was planning a further three missions during 1986.

At the same time New Zealand businessmen have not been slow to investigate opportunities in the Canadian market. One Auckland firm has secured three agencies in the electronics field already and is planning further similar associations.

Considerable emphasis has been placed on the exchanges of foodstuffs now that the direct air services provide rapid and reliable freight services. A Canadian Consulate initiative has obtained brochures from more than 50 Canadian food producers. These materials are planned to provide the focus to a series of at least three exhibitions throughout New Zealand in the near future. Even before these exhibitions have been mounted, there has been clear interest shown by New Zealand importers.

Similarly, food exporters from New Zealand have begun to open up new marketing outlets in Canada, with considerable emphasis on the hitherto

relatively remote areas of Eastern Canada. In this context both fish and meat exporters have reported encouraging successes. Other perishable products such as cut flowers and horticultural items are also being traded.

Consumer products are also beginning to show up in the newly established exchanges. One Montreal company has found a ready market in New Zealand for manual wringer washers. There is evidence of considerable interest in refrigerators and other white goods as well as gas ovens especially designed for use in yachts.

Other Canadian products coming to New Zealand include plastic plates for use in microwave ovens, and electronic bug killers. A New Zealand manufacturer of plastic clothes pegs has found a ready acceptance for his products in Canada.

There is already ample evidence that regardless of whether the trade opportunities or the direct freight service was the catalyst, the result has been a rapid widening of trade contacts between the two countries.