

## Health care by satellite

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satellite conference call was used to forestall an unnecessarily early evacuation of a seriously ill baby. The next day, *Hermes* provided the only means of communication available to expedite removal of a pregnant woman from Kasechewan.

### The powerful "Hermes"

The Ottawa-built *Hermes*, said to be the world's most powerful communications satellite, was launched January 17 from Cape Canaveral, Florida. (*Hermes* is the advanced technology forerunner of a new type of satellite, oriented towards provision of improved broadcast distribution and able to provide inexpensive new communications services in thinly-populated areas in fields like tele-education, tele-health, community work and government administration and services. The system uses a new satellite frequency band, with about 30 times more power than present communications satellites, and new, portable earth stations with antennas as small as a metre in diameter.)

In the London/Moose Factory/Kasechewan experiment, *Hermes* will enable satellite-aided clinical examinations, decision-making and diagnosis. Electro-cardiograms, X-rays, ultrasonic imagery and other forms of medical data will be transmitted, to enable the base hospital doctor to obtain the advice of specialists in London, or allow the northern nurse to practise a level of health care previously impossible or inappropriate.

The purpose of the experiment is to enable health services planners to determine the extent to which high-quality communications links such as

this one can best be put to work to upgrade health care in a vast region where the average distance to the nearest hospital – and often the nearest doctor as well – is about 400 miles. When adverse weather prevents evacuation flights of emergency cases, patients can die. It is believed satellites like *Hermes* can reduce this toll by substituting communications for transportation in crisis situations like these.

Other experiments will follow, planned by the Government of Ontario, Memorial University of Newfoundland and the Rural Health Society of Victoria, British Columbia. A total of 18

of 26 planned *Hermes* applications experiments are now either complete or under way, with the remainder scheduled to commence early in 1977.

### Canada/U.S. project

The *Hermes* program is a joint Canada-U.S. venture, in which the Department of Communications was responsible for design and construction of the \$60-million spacecraft and the United States, through NASA, provided a high-powered transmitting tube, launch and pre-launch test support. The U.S., which has 13 experiment "users" in similar applications, shares equally use of the satellite on alternate days.

## News briefs

■ The Bank of Canada bank rate was reduced to 9 per cent from 9.5 per cent November 22. Bank of Canada Governor Gerald Bouey said November 19 the reduction was justified because of progress in reducing inflation and in moderating the rate of increase in the money supply. The rate charged by the central bank for infrequent loans to the commercial banks generally influences other interest rates, and should lead to lower rates for mortgages and consumer loans.

■ Len Marchand, minister responsible for small business has signed an \$80-million contract in Warsaw for the sale of three paper-making machines to Poland, announced the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce recently. A department spokesman said the contract, which will create an estimated 800 man-years of work in Canada, is the largest single sale of equipment by a Canadian firm to Eastern Europe. Eight Canadian firms have signed contracts for work on the project valued at \$170 million.

■ The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation will increase its television coverage of international soccer next year. Major matches will be carried on 14 Saturday afternoons from April 30 to August 27.

■ Collectively-bargained settlements produced an average annual increase in base wage rates over the life of the contract of 9.7 per cent in the third quarter, the lowest quarterly rate of increase since the end of 1972, the

federal Labour Department reports. The third quarter rate of increase was about half the 18.7 percent peak recorded during the second quarter of 1975 before the rate began to fall. It has shown a steady decline since then, reaching 11.2 per cent in the second quarter of this year.

■ CBUFT-Vancouver, the new French-language television station was officially inaugurated November 12 with a TV special of a concert by the Vancouver Symphony taped in the Centennial Theatre for the Radio-Canada Concert Populaire series. Although the initial proposal for a French-language station raised some negative comments from the largely English-speaking public of Vancouver, the broadcasts have been received enthusiastically in the city, and letters have come from the neighbouring U.S. state of Washington inquiring about how they can get the French service on one of their cable channels.

■ An eighteenth-century portrait of John Graves Simco, Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada from 1791 to 1806, was sold recently at auction to an anonymous buyer for \$14,850 at Christie's in London. The painting, believed to be the work of the Anglo-German painter Johann Zoffany, founder member of Britain's Royal Academy, will be returned to Canada.

■ Newfoundland is planning to impose a tax on companies which fail to explore and develop their long-term mineral concessions, provincial Mines and Energy Minister Brian Peckford says.

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