

News briefs

Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau joined leaders of West Germany, Nigeria, Australia, Norway, Venezuela and Jamaica on December 28 and 29 for discussions on aid and assistance to developing countries.

The Montreal newspaper, *Montreal-Matin*, closed down on December 27 after 48 years of publication. Fernand Roy, vice-president of the French-language tabloid, said the paper's losses were too much to bear for its parent paper, *La Presse*.

The Hudson's Bay Company has secured more than 60 per cent of Simpson's Ltd., its former rival. Bay President Donald McGiverin said Simpsons would continue to operate as a "separate organization under its own name". If the Bay succeeds in securing all Simpsons holdings, the resulting company would replace Simpsons-Sears as Canada's largest retail store chain, with a sales volume of more than \$3.63 billion, based on 1977 figures.

Alberta's economy will remain basically healthy with a new surge expected in the 1980s, said speakers at an economic outlook conference recently. Peter Gusen of Ottawa, an analyst with the Conference Board in Canada, said construction activity had reached a plateau in the province and increase in this sector likely would be only 2 per cent this year. But that still would be a significant achievement, he said, as the \$2.2-billion Syncrude oil-sands plant was completed last year. Gusen said a new wave of construction activity was expected in the 1980s when other major energy projects come on stream, but for this year, with construction activity almost at the same level, Alberta's total economic growth would be about 3.4 per cent.

The 1978 wheat crop has been revised to 776.9 million bushels, up 2 per cent from a previous estimate and up 6.5 per

cent from 1977's revised crop of 729.8 million bushels, Statistics Canada reports.

The Alaska highway natural gas pipeline project should provide a market for more than \$3-million worth of Canadian materials and labour, a Foothills Pipelines' official said recently. "Moreover," said C. Kent Jespersen, Services' vice-president of Foothills (Yukon) Ltd., "the pipeline is expected to generate at least 60,000 man-years of direct and indirect employment in Canada." When completed, the pipeline will deliver about 2.4 billion cubic feet of Alaskan gas daily to California and the mid-western U.S. The pipeline now is expected to be completed by fall of 1983. Jespersen said the operation would yield an annual net benefit of more than \$500 million in Canada's U.S. balance of payments.

Realized net income from farm operations in Canada (excluding Newfoundland and the Yukon and Northwest Territories) amounted to an estimated \$3,410 million in 1977, down 11 per cent from the revised 1976 level of \$3,790 million. Realized gross income — farm cash receipts plus income-in-kind — increased 1 per cent in 1977 to \$11,200 million. These latest data are after revisions made to the preliminary estimates of farm expenses released in May and are based on additional information from the farm expenditure and agricultural enumerative surveys for 1977.

Quebec's provincial debt increased by \$762.1 million in the fiscal year which ended last March 31, Finance Minister Jacques Parizeau said recently. The government took in \$10.7 billion — \$154.1 million less than estimated in the budget for 1977-1978 — and spent \$11.5 billion, \$32 million less than was forecast. Of the money collected, about \$7.7 billion was in the form of taxes and other payments, and \$3 billion came from the Federal Government in transfer payments. Total borrowing by the province was \$1.042 billion, higher than the \$900-million target figure set by Mr. Parizeau in his April budget.

Sycor Inc., a U.S. subsidiary of Northern Telecom Ltd. of Montreal, has merged with Data 100 Corporation of Minnetonka, Minnesota to form the nucleus of Northern Telecom Systems Corporation, which will manage its electronic office equipment business. Northern Telecom also announced that its U.S. telecommunications subsidiary, Northern Telecom Inc., had completed acquisition of Eastern

Data Industries Inc., and its wholly-owned subsidiary, Spectron Corporation.

Federal prison construction spending will be reduced by \$225 million, Solicitor-General Jean-Jacques Blais announced recently, who said \$280 million would be spent to build five new prisons and to renovate ten existing ones. The revised plan will save \$60 million a year in operating costs. It involves building larger prisons than planned and enlarging others.

The number of divorce decrees granted in 1977 totalled 55,370, an increase of about 2 per cent over those granted in 1976. The rate per 100,000 population edged up marginally to 237.7 in 1977 from 235.8 in 1976. Among the provinces, British Columbia registered the highest rate (330.4) while Newfoundland had the lowest (81.1) in 1977.

Work has begun by the National Research Council on the design and construction of an impulse radar for the measurement of thick sea-ice. This instrument transmits narrow pulses of energy at a pulse recurrence frequency (PRF) of 1.25 MHz. A pulse radar operating at either of two frequencies of 1.0 or 1.9 GHz is also being constructed. This unit employs unconventional signal processing in order to measure the ice thickness.

A \$4-million plant to turn wood waste into fuel could be in operation in northern Ontario or Quebec by 1980, says a spokesman for Shell Canada Ltd. Shell has an option on the Woodex system, a process that converts waste wood into fuel pellets developed by Bio Solar Research and Development Corporation of Eugene, Oregon. Shell's option entitles it to become the system's licensee in every province except British Columbia.

CAE Industries Ltd. has been awarded contracts totalling about \$13 million to supply commercial aircraft flight simulators to three North American airlines — Trans World Airlines, Pacific Southwest Airlines and Mexicana Airlines.

Mushrooms are richer in protein on a dry weight basis than most comparable garden crops, says Professor Ralph Estey of Montreal's McGill University. In an article in the *Macdonald Journal*, he adds that they are low in fats and carbohydrates and rich in several types of Vitamin B. They are also an excellent source of folic acid, the blood-building vitamin once thought to be confined to spinach, kidney and raw liver. "The mushroom," he concludes, "is no longer a mere luxury but an economical staple food item."

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