

New position for Stats Canada chief

Dr. Sylvia Ostry has been appointed Deputy Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, effective February 19. She is replacing Michael Pitfield who recently became Clerk of the Privy Council and Secretary to the Cabinet. Dr. Ostry, 45, is one of Canada's leading economists and has been Chief Statistician of Canada since 1972. She is married and has two children. Although three other women hold the rank of deputy minister in the federal Public Service, Dr. Ostry is the only one to head a policy-making and operating department. The others are Public Service Commissioner Irene Johnson, National Gallery director Jean Boggs and Food Prices Review chairman Beryl Plumptre.



Dr. Sylvia Ostry

Canada gives urgent food aid

Immediate agricultural and food aid assistance of \$71.4 million channelled through the Canadian International Development Agency is to be directed to countries most severely in need of food. This assistance fulfills the Canadian pledge at the recent World Food Conference that Canada would make \$50 million available immediately, to relieve acute distress. The total includes \$20 million for special food aid and transportation assistance to Bangladesh as part of a united effort by the international community to meet that country's urgent needs.

A further \$5 million has recently been allocated to the Bangladesh program as part of the \$50-million pledge at the Rome conference. This brings to \$60 million, Canadian contributions to Bangladesh in 1974 to help relieve food shortages.

The breakdown of the \$71.4-million allocation for food aid and agricultural assistance is: Bangladesh \$25 million; Sahel countries of West Africa \$15.5 million; Tanzania \$5 million; Pakistan \$9.4 million (fertilizer); Sri Lanka \$1 million (fertilizer); additional food products, \$12 million.

Most of the food aid will be wheat and wheat products. The funds have been redirected by CIDA to the food and agricultural aid program from its current total spending authorization of \$733 million.

Non-resident investors — income tax exemption change

Finance Minister John N. Turner announced recently that he would propose a change to the provisions of the Income Tax Act relating to the conditions certain non-resident investors must satisfy to qualify for certificates entitling them to exemption from the non-resident withholding tax on interest.

At present, certain foreign charitable organizations and other institutions, which are exempt from tax in their home countries, are entitled to an exemption from the 15 percent Canadian tax imposed on interest they receive from Canada. This exemption is also available to certain non-resident pension plans. However, under the existing law, a number of foreign trusts and corporations established to administer other types of employee benefit plan have technically failed to qualify for an exemption certificate if they provided benefits other than pension benefits. The Minister indicated that such trusts and corporations would be treated in the same way as pension plans for the purpose of qualifying for this exemption from Canadian tax.

Mr. Turner, therefore, announced his intention to propose an amendment to paragraph 212(14) (c) of the Income Tax Act, effective January 1, 1975 to permit any corporation or trust to qualify for a certificate if its principal

An economy house made of sulphur

When Mr. Witold Rybcynski and a group of fellow architects from Montreal's McGill University were looking for a new way to build inexpensive homes, they were thinking primarily of people in developing countries.

In their search for cheaper materials for low-income families, they came up with a new product composed of sulphur and an aggregate such as sand, to replace conventional concrete.

Sulphur, an industrial residue that sells for \$6 a ton, is produced in vast quantities in Alberta and is a by-product of an anti-pollution process for stripping sulphur from gas and petroleum.

This mixture of aggregates (sand, gravel, earth, clay) and sulphur (about 30 per cent) has many advantages in the manufacture of building blocks. The blocks are as durable as concrete; they harden very rapidly and are easily removed from the forms since no water is required.

This new material, which insulates better than concrete, is waterproof and easily recycled. Moreover, the sulphur can be mixed with several kinds of aggregate. Although the price of sulphur is very low at the present time, Quebec will still have to bring it in from western Canada.

Journalist Michel Vadeboncoeur, in his article on the subject for the weekly newspaper *La Patrie*, points out another disadvantage: during a fire, toxic fumes of sulphur dioxide would be given off. The walls might also melt, but they would not ignite, since the sulphur-aggregate mixture is fire-proof.

In addition to building an experimental summer cottage using sulphur blocks, the McGill group also wished to study various ecological aspects such as recycling of water using solar energy, production of electricity by means of a wind-powered generator, etc.

The cost of the sulphur-block walls was a mere \$34; the complete house came to only \$1,901.25.

purpose was to administer or provide benefits under a superannuation, pension or retirement fund or plan, or any type of fund or plan established to provide employee benefits.