

CANADIAN ROUNDUP

Ambassador to Peking

China has accepted the appointment of Mr. Ralph E. Collins as Canada's first Ambassador in Peking. Mr. Collins, at present, is an assistant deputy minister with the Department of External Affairs.

Mr. Huang Hua, a former Ambassador to the United Arab Republic, will be China's first representative in Ottawa.

Unemployed Canadians

The Department of Manpower and Immigration and the Dominion Bureau of Statistics announced on April 15 that the number of unemployed Canadians dropped last month by 25,000. The present unemployment rate is 7.8 percent of the working force.

A year ago, the March labour force was 8,067,000, the number of jobless 542,000, and the unemployment rate 6.7%.

Constitutional Conference

A climate of co-operation and a willingness to make progress is being shown by government leaders towards constitutional negotiations, Justice Minister John Turner said on April 15. The Federal Minister was in Edmonton to meet Premier Harry Strom and other Alberta officials to discuss the Constitutional Conference to be held in Victoria from June 14 to 16. Discussions now are at the stage of refining the tentative conclusion reached at the February constitutional conference into some form acceptable to all provinces and the federal government.

Four Federal By-elections Scheduled for May 31

By-elections to fill four vacant Commons seats, three of them previously held by Liberals, have been set for May 31.

Acting Prime Minister Arthur Laing announced the by-elections on April 16 for Chambly and Trois-Rivieres in Quebec, Brant in Ontario and Central Nova in Nova Scotia.

No date was set for a by-election in the Saskatchewan riding of Assiniboia, vacant since the death on March 6 of Liberal A. B. Douglas.

Communications Technology Satellite

Canada and the USA signed an agreement on April 20 for the first co-operative international project for an experimental communications technology satellite. The experiment, to cost Canada \$27 million is to test ways to cut high costs of ground stations which would put reception from satellites within financial reach of small, isolated communities. The Communications Minister said this kind of technology is a must for Canada with its small population and large area.

Consumers Gas Buys Controlling Interest

Energy Minister J. J. Greene announced on April 22 that the Consumers Gas Co. of Toronto has bought controlling interest in Home Oil Co. of Calgary thereby retaining control in Canada. A special debate was held in February when Government and opposition MPs spoke out against a proposed sale to a USA firm.

NDP Leadership Convention

Mr. David Lewis captured the leadership of the NDP on April 25 on the fourth ballot to succeed T.C. Douglas who is retiring after ten years. Mr. Lewis received 1,046 votes to 612 for James Laxer in the contest which started with five candidates. Mr. Lewis said he would try to persuade Mr. Laxer and other "Waffle Group" leaders to stop running a party within a party. Throughout the convention policy discussions the "Wafflers" tried to push the party towards the left, advocating stringent curbs on foreign ownership and widespread industrial nationalization.

Budget Deficit

In a bid to stimulate employment, housing construction and health care improvements without a tax increase Ontario Provincial Treasurer D'Arcy McKeough announced a record budget deficit of \$415 million for 1971-72. The April 26 budget outlined a limit on civil service expansion and salary increases to control government expenses. An increase in the price of beer will provide some added revenue.

Salary Increases

Prime Minister Trudeau announced on April 26 that it is proposed to increase the salaries of Members of Parliament from \$12,000 to \$18,000 and a tax free expense allowance from \$6,000 to \$8,000. Under the proposal Senators will also receive an increase under the same legislation. The new rates will be retroactive to October 8, 1970 when the current session began. Federally appointed judges salaries will go up by as much as \$9,000. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court will get a \$7,000 increase to \$47,000 annually. Chief Justices of the new Federal Court and of the Provincial Courts will get an additional \$9,000 bringing their annual pay to \$39,000. The proposals are now under study by Parliament.

Increased Postage

The Government has announced plans to increase postage rates for first class letters of under one ounce from six cents to seven cents from July 1 and then to eight cents from January 1 next year.

Kierans Resigns

The Minister without Portfolio in charge of the Post Office Jean-Pierre Cote has replaced Mr. Eric Kierans as Communications Minister. Mr. Kierans announced on April 29 that he was resigning because he could not as a Minister openly criticize government economic policies. He told Prime Minister Trudeau the policies must be re-examined and that full employment rather than resource development be made the main priority. Mr. Kierans will retain his seat in the Commons as a Liberal member for Montreal Duvernay.

B.C. Centennial

The Queen accompanied by Prince Philip and Princess Anne arrived in Vancouver on May 3 for a ten-day Royal tour of British Columbia to help celebrate the provinces' centennial. Governor-General Michener, Prime Minister Trudeau, Lt.-Gov. John Nicholson and Premier W. A. C. Bennett and their wives welcomed the Royal party on their arrival.