

For August 1966, the Department of Forestry and Rural Development estimated that some 1,275 fires damaged 300,000 acres.

BARBADOS INDEPENDENCE

Canada was officially represented at the ceremonies marking the independence of Barbados on November 30 by Mr. J.W. Pickersgill, Minister of Transport and Mr. J.R. McKinney, Canadian High Commissioner to Trinidad and Tobago.

In addition, two ships of the Royal Canadian Navy, HMCS *Gatineau* and HMCS *St. Laurent* visited Barbados during the independence celebrations.

On his return from Barbados Mr. Pickersgill stayed overnight on December 1 in Santo Domingo, at the invitation of President Balaguer of the Dominican Republic.

WORLD WITHOUT DISTANCE

(Continued from P. 2)

we can curve space — fold it in this way — we may in our lifetime be able to step from one continent to another as easily as we now move from one room to another.

FUTURE FORECAST

...The time will come soon when we shall be able to call anyone anywhere on earth by merely dialing a number. Each of us will have a number. We shall automatically be located whether we are in mid-ocean, in the heart of a great city, or crossing the Sahara. This instrument alone may change the patterns of society and commerce as greatly as the telephone, its primitive ancestor, did over the past half century. The perils are obvious: think of the invasions to privacy. No invention can be completely beneficial. Yet think of the countless lives it would save, the tragedies and heartbreaks it would avert. Remember what the telephone has meant to lonely people everywhere. No one need ever be lost again because a simple position and direction-finding device can be incorporated into the receiver, using today's radar navigational aids. In the event of danger or accident, help could be summoned merely by pressing a button....

As communications improve, the need for transportation will decrease. Our grandchildren will scarcely believe that millions of people once spent literally hours of every day fighting their way into city offices, where, as often as not, they did nothing that could not be achieved over telecommunications links. Soon, global phone and vision services will enable executives to confer with each other anywhere on the planet. We are only at the beginning. Today we have data-handling systems capable of controlling nation-wide industrial empires from one spot. Electronics is already permitting the decentralization which rising rents and overhead costs encourage more strongly every year.

The business of the future may be run by executives who are scarcely ever in each other's physical presence. The head office may be merely the equivalent of a telephone number with its files and records in space rented in memory units of computers which could be located anywhere on earth. The information stored in them could be read off on high-speed printers where, whenever any of the firm's offices needed it, it would be instantly available. The time may come when half the world's business may be transacted through vast memory banks, be it the barrens of our Northwest Territories, the tundra of Siberia, or the inner reaches of Labrador, or wherever land is cheap and useless for any other purpose. Any point on earth will be accessible to the beams of relay satellites. A sweep from pole to pole would merely mean turning antennae through 17 degrees....

SKY THE LIMIT

Another use of space and satellites might be the orbital post office. This would render airmail obsolete. Modern facsimile systems can automatically transmit and reproduce the equivalent of an entire book in less than a minute. By using these techniques, a single satellite could handle a whole day's transatlantic correspondence. Tomorrow we might purchase a standard letter form, write or type the message which would then be fed into a machine, which scans the marks on the paper, converts them into electrical signals and transmits them to the appropriate place around the earth, to a machine which picks them up and reproduces them on a blank identical form. All this would take a fraction of a second. Door-to-door delivery might prolong the necessary time to several hours, but eventually letters need never take more than a day between any two points on the globe.

Perhaps, beyond the next decade, there may be something more startling — the orbital newspaper. Made possible by modern reproducing and facsimile machines, these could work by means of television sets which will be able, on demand, to make a permanent record of the picture flashed on the screen. When you want your daily newspaper, you will switch to the appropriate channel, press the right button and collect the latest edition as it emerges from the slot....

Nor will that limit the possibilities. Over the same circuits we will be able to conjure up from central memory banks or information centres, copies of any document we desire from the Magna Carta to the current earth-moon passenger schedules....

Personal radios, translating machines, global libraries, telesensory devices, logical languages, mechanical educators, robots, memory machines — these are all conceivable in the not-too-distant future....

NEW INTERNATIONAL DIMENSIONS

Our international problems and relations will assume new dimensions in an era of limitless freedom of communication. Our Canadian concern for economic independence may pale when the whole world becomes what Marshall McLuhan has called a global village. Global communications will be a revolu-