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## New mobile data system

An advanced mobile radio data system (MRDS), the product of a \$2.5-million federal project to improve Canadian electronics technology, was presented to Vancouver police recently.

MRDS, developed as a model under agreements by the Department of Communications, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and Vancouver, is the first of its kind in Canada.

The Vancouver patrol car radios, which have full alpha-numeric keyboards, special function keys and display screens for messages of up to six lines, each consisting of a maximum of 40 characters, will allow quick response to questions on stolen cars, wanted persons, etc.

Voice channels used by most major Canadian police forces can be so congested with peak-hour radio traffic that officers have had to wait to get on the air — sometimes in emergencies that have threatened lives.

The system, which should also end unauthorized eavesdropping on police communications, will also conserve radio frequency spectrum.

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## Corporations to report increases

The Centre for the Study of Inflation and Productivity, the Government's new inflation watchdog, has asked 190 major corporations to provide it with up-to-date information on and reasons for price increases.

The agency has asked for information on price changes of some significance, for example "above 3 per cent cumulatively on an annual basis". It is interested in price changes for products, product lines or services that are an important part of a company's sales, are important raw materials or form a significant part of consumers' budgets. Unlike the Anti-Inflation Board, the centre does not have the power to require that data be provided. It also cannot intervene directly in wage and price decisions.

The companies are also asked to tell the centre of significant price changes in materials and services used by them.

The centre was created last year after the economic council was asked by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau to keep an eye on inflation in the post wage and price con-

trols period.

Companies asked to provide the information include the chartered banks, major meat packers and food companies, textile, petroleum and chemical companies, the auto and tire manufacturers, major life insurance companies, forest products and steel producers, public utilities such as Hydro-Quebec, restaurant chains such as McDonald's and major mineral and resource companies.

Consumer Affairs Minister Warren Allmand said he would study price and profit increases in the food and lumber industries and at Bell Canada.

The Government has asked both labour and business to exercise restraint to avoid setting off another round of high inflation.

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## Prize for personal privacy

Every Friday night at the University of Waterloo a free beer awaits the student who has made the most impressive security breach of the week in the campus computer network.

It's all in fun, and the information obtained by penetrating one of the 95 computer systems is trivial — another student's assignment, for example, says computer science professor Eric Manning.

"But the same hardware and software is used elsewhere," he said recently, in response to a brief exchange in the House of Commons on the issue of "government computer safeguards".

Professor Manning is a constituent of a Progressive Conservative member of parliament who quoted him in the Commons about the need for safeguards in the government computer network and for elimination of social insurance numbers on information not related to unemployment or the Canada Pension Plan, to guard against "massive invasions of personal privacy". The professor fears that as more computers compile more information on citizens, dossiers will develop over time, especially if and when the information is linked.

Public Works Minister Judd Buchanan told the Commons that the Government had been investigating the subject of restrictions on further links between government computers, and Minister of Employment and Immigration Bud Cullen drew attention to his request for a department advisory study on the use of social insurance numbers in the transfer of in-

formation on individuals.

Professor Manning believes it is the computer machinery, not the insurance number itself, that provides governments the opportunity to invade the privacy of their citizens.

He added that students who found loopholes enabling them to "crack" campus computer systems were expected to devise ways to prevent the occurrence from happening again.

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## Canada's oldest company

The company that once owned most of what is now Canada has become the country's largest retailer. The Hudson's Bay Company, created by royal charter in 1670, and still the world's biggest fur trader, selling \$320-million worth last year, claims a total retail business exceeding \$2 billion a year.

Until recently, one-third of the Hudson's Bay Company stores were in such remote places as Repulse Bay, Frobisher Bay, and God's Narrow, doing business with the Indians and the Inuit. During the past year its activities grew, with the acquisition of Shop-rite's 71 retail stores; Field's 68 outlets in western Canada, and Zellers' 156 stores across the country.

In January it acquired Simpson's Ltd., with 21 department stores, giving the Bay, for the first time, a chain of department stores from Vancouver to Halifax. The company, which does extensive real estate business, is also active in mining and oil exploration.

For most of its 300 years of existence, the Bay was mainly British-owned. In 1970 the head office was moved from London, England to Winnipeg; at present, 78 per cent of its shares are held by Canadians.

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## Toronto/Amsterdam twinned

Toronto has been twinned with Amsterdam this year to commemorate the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Dutch city's liberation from Nazi occupation on May 8, 1945. The Burgomaster Wim Pik has announced that his city would send 3,500 tulip bulbs to Toronto in time for them to bloom in city parks in May 1980. In addition, every Canadian born in Toronto on May 8, 1980 will receive from Amsterdam a savings account book including a deposit of up to \$35.