

Dollar up debts down

The Federal Government has repaid \$1.9 billion in bank loans that were taken out last year to help the weakening Canadian dollar, which is steadily gaining strength. Out of the almost \$5 billion that was borrowed from domestic and foreign banks, \$1.3 billion was repaid to the United States and overseas banks and \$600 million to banks in Canada.

Foreign debt cleared

The payment eliminates the Government's foreign currency debt with banks outside the country, although an arrangement remains which leaves a stand-by credit open to Canada of \$3 billion in U.S. currency.

The Government still owes Canadian banks \$500 million and has further stand-by credit with them of \$2 billion U.S.

At the end of April, the Government's reserve holdings of U.S. dollars were \$3.002 billion, a \$227-million-drop from the March figure. Holdings of other foreign currencies dropped by \$4.4 million to \$13.3 million. Gold on reserve dropped to \$985.8 million from last month's \$996.7 million.

The reserve in the International Monetary Fund dropped by \$28.4 million and its special IMF drawing rights decreased by \$8.6 million. A large part of this apparent decline, was, however, a reflection of weakness of the U.S. dollar, the basis of Canada's reserves, measured against other major currencies.

French education ministers meet

Canada hosted the thirty-second session of the Conference of Ministers of Education of French-speaking Countries (CONFEMEN) in Quebec City, April 25-27.

Organized by the provincial government of Quebec, CONFEMEN was preceded by a meeting of experts of the African and Malagasyan Council of Higher Education (CAMES).

The major purpose of the conference is to promote adjustment of systems of education to the changing conditions of the modern world and to the economic and social development needs of member countries.

The agenda of the April session included the theme "School and Life", as well as questions such as the production

of pedagogical material and pedagogical research and innovations. This conference and the Conference of Ministers of Youth and Sport of French-speaking Countries (CONFESJES) together with the Agency for Cultural and Technical Co-operation (ACCT) constitute the inter-governmental institutions of *la Francophonie internationale*, in which Canada has participated since 1969. They have been held annually in one of the member states.

The Canadian delegation to CONFEMEN was led by Jean-Pierre Ouellet, Minister of Youth, Leisure and Cultural Resources of New Brunswick. Quebec was represented by Jacques-Yvan Morin, Deputy Premier and Minister of Education, who was elected vice-president of the conference at its session held last year in Ouagadougou, Upper Volta. Ontario was represented by Gérard Raymond, Assistant Deputy Minister of Education, and Manitoba by Gérard Lécuyer of the Department of Education.

A dinner given by Jeanne Sauvé, federal Minister of Communications and Adviser for Francophone Affairs to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, was attended by ministers and heads of delegation. Following the conference, delegates visited Fredericton April 28-29 as guests of the government of New Brunswick.

The member states of the CONFEMEN are: Belgium, Benin, Burundi, Cameroun, Canada, Congo, Ivory Coast, Central African Empire, France, Gabon, Haiti, Upper Volta, Mauritius, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Chad, Togo, Zaire. Djibouti became a member at the April conference.

Invited as observers were: Cape Verde Islands, Comores, Dominica, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Morocco, Mauritania, St. Lucia, São Tome & Principe, Seychelles, Tunisia.

Human genetics centre established

What is believed to be Canada's first Human Genetics Centre has been established at Montreal's McGill University, and will integrate the university's teaching, research and clinical activities in the field.

The appointment of Dr. Leonard Pinsky as director became official on January 1, the date the centre opened.

Dr. Pinsky already holds a number of appointments at the university, the Jew-

ish General and Montreal Children's hospitals, all of which he will retain. His research at the Jewish General, which will continue to occupy most of his time, is concerned with the responsiveness of human cells to the sex hormones secreted by the body.

Firsts in the field of human genetics are not new to McGill. In 1951, Canada's first Department of Medical Genetics was established at the Montreal Children's Hospital (then the Children's Memorial Hospital) under the direction of F. Clarke Fraser. Later, a Human Genetics Sector was formed within the Department of Genetics (now part of the Biology Department). ("Medical genetics" and "human genetics" mean approximately the same thing, "medical genetics" being used to describe the application of human genetic knowledge to disease.)

In 1972, the Canadian Medical Research Council created at McGill the first Group in Medical Genetics in the country.

Australia/Canada cut air fares

Canadian and Australian air transport authorities have agreed to new low air fares between Vancouver and Sydney.

The Minister of Transport, Otto Lang, said he was encouraged by the sizable reduction in economy and off-peak excursion fares although there would be some increases for first class travel and for peak season Advance Purchase Excursion (APEX) and Group Inclusive Tour fares.

"The travelling public will be able to take advantage of a new off-peak APEX price which is 43 percent less than it was last year," Mr. Lang said. "With similar fare reductions for travel out of Australia, the new fare structure will stimulate additional traffic and boost tourism and trade between our two countries."

The return fares in Canadian dollars between Canada and Australia (Vancouver-Sydney) are:

	Old fare		New fare
First class	\$2,650	Stop over	\$3,090
		Point to point	\$2,688
Economy	\$1,814	Stop over	\$1,842
		Point to point	\$1,600
APEX	\$1,166	Peak	\$1,330
		Shoulder	\$1,030
		Low	\$ 674
Group inclusive tour	\$ 950	Peak	\$1,130
		Shoulder	\$1,030
		Low	\$ 674
Group inclusive tour children		All year	\$ 566