

News briefs

Justice Minister Jean Chrétien recently tabled in the House of Commons a background paper on the amending of the British North America Act. The minister said the paper, entitled *The Role of the United Kingdom in the Amendment of the Canadian Constitution*, was prepared because there is "growing interest in the Parliament of Canada among Canadians concerning the role of the United Kingdom in relation to our Constitution".

A new Canadian microcomputer manufacturing company has been established in the Ottawa area. The company will be a merger of Bruce Instruments, Computer Innovation Limited of Ottawa and MFC Microsystems International Limited also of Ottawa. The company will aim at commercial and industrial operations of mini-computers. A spokesman for MFC said the new product is to be a marriage of the computer with cable television technology. Such a development would be complementary to Telidon, Canada's two-way television system.

Brascan Limited of Toronto has become the second largest shareholder of Royal Trustco after buying 14.9 per cent of the company's shares, in two major transactions estimated to total about \$56 million.

Activity in the heavy construction industry this year will total about \$53 billion, a small gain from 1980, according to Robert Nuth, president of the Canadian Construction Association. The active parts of the country will be Alberta, British Columbia and Saskatchewan.

The third session of the forty-ninth New Brunswick Legislature opened on March 24. Language legislation was the main focus of the Speech from the Throne. Other topics included a promise to establish collective bargaining rights for fishermen, major amendments to the



Brian Curry turns on the air supply for his wife, Ellen, moments before she enters a tank of water in Oshawa, Ontario in a successful bid to set an underwater endurance record. She was pulled from the tank 68 hours later breaking the old mark in the Guinness Book of World Records by 15 minutes.

mining act to encourage exploration and development and new initiatives to develop oil shares in Albert County. Little new legislation and no big spending programs were announced.

The co-operative movement is expected to start three new companies this spring as vehicles for its proposed \$1 billion investment in the energy scene, according to W.E. Bergen, chairman of the movement's steering committee. Called the Co-operative Energy Project, the proposal will be voted on May 8 following the annual meetings of the Canadian Co-operative Credit Society and the Co-operative Union of Canada. Mr. Bergen said that the new companies will increase Canadian control of the petroleum industry, protect energy supplies for the members and act as an investment vehicle.

Union Oil Company of Canada and Rescon Coal Holdings said that the Alberta government has approved development of a thermal coal mine and processing plant near Hinton. The mine, to cost \$240 million, will have an initial capacity of 3 million metric tons a year and employ about 400 workers. Subject to sales agree-

ments with European and Pacific Rim buyers, construction could start in 1981 with deliveries beginning in the second half of 1983.

Fraser Incorporated has announced a \$170-million modernization program of its pulp mill in Atholville, New Brunswick. The construction phase of the project is expected to begin in early May and will take three years. The project will employ 500 people during the peak construction period and create an additional 43 permanent jobs.

Four-hundred-and-thirty members of the Canadian Airborne Regiment based at Petawawa, Ontario left Canada recently to begin six months of United Nations peacekeeping duties in Cyprus. The contingent replaced the 5e Régiment d'artillerie légère du Canada (5RALC) and members of the 5e Régiment de génie de combat (5RGC) who returned to their home base at Valcartier, Quebec after a six-month tour on the Mediterranean Island. This Cyprus rotation is the thirty-fifth since Canadian troops began serving there in March 1964.

The British Columbia government presented a budget on March 9. Effective immediately, the retail sales tax rises to 6 per cent from 4 per cent, and taxes rise on cigarettes, tobacco and gasoline. Retroactive to January 1, corporate income taxes for larger firms have been raised to 16 per cent from 15 per cent, corporate income taxes for larger firms have been lowered to 8 per cent from 10 per cent, a 10 per cent surtax has been applied to personal income tax above \$3,500.

The Export Development Corporation (EDC) has announced the signing of a loan agreement totalling up to \$8.5 million (Cdn.) to support the \$10-million sale of Canadian electrical equipment and services from about 18 Canadian exporters to Brazil. The borrower, Light-Servicos Electricidade S.A. (Light) is a state-controlled utility authorized by the Brazilian government to generate, purchase, transmit and distribute electric power.

Agriculture Minister Eugene Whelan has announced that loans totalling \$221,026,702 were made in 1980 under the Farm Improvement Loans Act. This compares with \$262,700,219 loaned in 1979. Under the act, the government guarantees loans by chartered banks and other designated lenders to farmers for a wide range of purposes. The maximum that a borrower may have outstanding is \$100,000.

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