

Central American countries to receive more Canadian development aid

Canada will expand its development assistance program significantly to the countries of Central America, Secretary of State for External Affairs Mark MacGuigan has announced.

The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has allocated up to \$106 million for the region over the next five years which compares to total Canadian bilateral disbursements of \$60 million in the area since 1972, of which \$40 million were spent in the past five years.

Dr. MacGuigan said the government's decision followed a comprehensive review of development assistance to the area.

He added that the government's intentions reflect its deep concern for the conditions of poverty and economic dislocation in Central America which lie beneath the current instability and traumatic social change there.

Because of the turbulent situation in Central America, a flexible approach will

have to be taken towards the extent and modalities of the assistance for the time being, said Dr. MacGuigan.

Honduras, the poorest of the Central American countries, would be the largest recipient of assistance as it has been in the past. Among the other countries in the region, Costa Rica and Nicaragua, which are experiencing serious economic problems, also will be recipients of increased aid, as will be Panama.

Nicaragua has already received \$4.5 million in wheat shipments and approval for the food sector strategy study was given last autumn.

Dr. MacGuigan expressed the hope that conditions in countries such as Guatemala and El Salvador where the current level of violence has made it difficult to maintain or plan for new development assistance projects would improve so as to permit a continuation of Canada's contribution to the social and economic development needs of these countries as well.

Firm awarded U.S. contracts

The Canadian Marconi Company of Montreal has received contracts valued at \$41.7 million (U.S.) for the supply of military communications equipment required by the United States government.

The two contracts were awarded through the Canadian Commercial Corporation under the Canada-U.S. Production Sharing Arrangement.

The communications equipment being supplied is a line of equipment developed in Canada which has proved to be a popular export item. It has resulted in export sales of about \$70 million since September 1981 and approximately \$475 million since its initial development.

The Canadian Commercial Corporation is a Crown agency that arranges contracts for the supply of Canadian goods and services with foreign governments and international agencies. Last year the corporation achieved sales of over \$400 million involving over 500 Canadian companies and 50 foreign governments.

PM's Commonwealth Day idea now an institution

Commonwealth Day was observed in Canada and throughout the Commonwealth on March 8 for the sixth consecutive year.

Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau proposed the annual observance at the 1975 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Kingston, Jamaica in order to make the Commonwealth better

known to its people, particularly in the schools.

The Commonwealth is a world-wide association of 46 countries, representing one-quarter of the world's population. Member nations, both developed and developing, work together on social and economic issues through political consultation and co-operation, through tech-

nical assistance and through many other forms of co-operation.

In Canada, the observance of Commonwealth Day is intended to emphasize the value Canada attaches to this unique association which represents many different races and cultures. In a statement made on Commonwealth Day this year, Prime Minister Trudeau said, "It behoves us to commemorate our longest continuous multilateral association with other countries to remind ourselves of the value of that association and the contribution Canada can make politically and economically to its further evolution and well being."

Various programs

Across the country, schools, public libraries, numerous organizations and branches of the Royal Commonwealth Society were provided with Commonwealth Day posters and information materials to assist in plans to mark the occasion and varied programs, both official and non-governmental, were carried out.

Interfaith services were held in Ottawa, Halifax, Vancouver, Victoria and Toronto under the auspices of the Royal Commonwealth Society. Governor General Edward Schreyer and Mrs. Schreyer attended such a service in Ottawa.



R. Vroom

External Relations Minister Pierre De Bané (right) and Jamaican High Commissioner Leslie Wilson (centre) view Commonwealth display designed by Peggy Steele (left).