

A Canadian Forces *Hercules* aircraft has taken food, clothing and medical supplies to the capital city of Tegucigalpa and has stayed on to ferry some 90,000 lbs. of supplies daily from there to the Caribbean coast.

The Canadian Ambassador to Honduras, G.C. Langille, the Embassy's First Secretary (development) Robert Anderson, and Gabriel Dicaire of CIDA's Latin American Division have been in Honduras for some time to evaluate needs and identify sectors where Canadian assistance would be most helpful.

Reports from the Ambassador and from other donor nations and organizations all stress that present requirements for aid in kind have been met and that most immediate need is for cash. Further shipments of goods could tie up sorely needed unloading and transportation facilities.

Canadians wishing to make a personal contribution to help the victims of Hurricane Fifi are invited to do so by sending a cash donation to the Canadian voluntary agency of their choice. All non-governmental organizations have their own channels for co-operation with the international agencies active in the stricken area.

Looking beyond the immediate needs for search, rescue and medical attention, CIDA also plans to take part in the rehabilitation program that will constitute the next phase of assistance. One of the first priority items already identified in this Canadian effort is the supply of powdered milk for use in children's feeding programs.



Yves Gagnon, second secretary of the Canadian mission, Guatemala, Canadian Ambassador Craig Langille, and crew members, Captain Lou Paproski,

Captain Chris Colton and Captain Lou Haavisto at Tegucigalpa, during Honduras airlift in aid of the victims of Hurricane Fifi.

Penicillin development research

Dr. Saul Wolfe, professor of chemistry at Queen's University has been awarded a \$106,500-Project Research Applicable to Industry (PRAI) grant from the National Research Council of Canada for the commercial development of new classes of antibacterial agents derived from penicillin. The work is being carried out by his research group and assisted by the Canada Development Corporation.

Following Alexander Fleming's discovery of the antibacterial properties of extracts of penicillium in the late 1920s, 15 years of work were needed to isolate and characterize fully the

active principles in these extracts. The reason for this is that penicillin contains a structural unit that is also chemically extremely fragile.

About 5 per cent of the population is now, or will eventually become allergic to penicillin. Allergic response occurs as the result of a chemical reaction, triggered by the presence in penicillin of a sulfur atom. The hypothesis behind Dr. Wolfe's work is that if this sulfur atom can be replaced by another, more appropriate atom, the allergic response will be removed without loss of the antibacterial activity. To achieve this transformation, however, it is necessary to dissect the molecule into its component parts without

destroying the most fragile portion. Then the sulfur atom must be removed and replaced by another atom. Finally, the new molecule must be reassembled in such a way that the only difference is the replacement of sulfur by the new atom.

To reduce this plan to practice has required 15 years of research. The first announcement of the work was made in 1972 when Dr. Wolfe delivered the Merck Sharpe and Dohme Award Lecture at the National Conference of the Chemical Institute of Canada. At that time he announced that his group had succeeded in synthesizing compounds that were 100 times more active than natural penicillin.