

Canada Weekly

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Canadian Christmas at the turn of the century, 1

Minister heads delegation to Mexico, 3

Niagara water pollution, 3

Former Quebec premier dies, 3

The year 1980 in pictures — some of the events on the Canadian scene, 4

Delegation at NATO meeting, 6

Ski team does well in World Cup, 6

Christmas cards of yesteryear on new postage stamps, 6

Cod catches to end, 6

News of the arts — The Christmas collection of the Public Archives, 7

News briefs, 8

Canadian Christmas at the turn of the century

The Christmas season, more than any other time of the year, has the power to evoke longing for days gone by. It brings back memories of our own childhood and recollection of stories told by our grandparents.

At the turn of the century in Quebec, during the coldest, darkest days of winter, homes shone with anticipation of the feasting and fellowship to be enjoyed with family and friends at that time.

The season started early with the arrival of Advent, a period of prayer and fasting, signalling the beginning of the preparations.

Animals were butchered and dressed, while houses were filled with the fragrance of cooking and baking. Pastries and meat pies were prepared along with headcheese and cretons (a pâté of chopped pork or goose meat baked in lard) and the women would try to outdo each other in decorating pastries and fancy cookies. Then, everything was conserved or frozen in ironware or earthenware, and placed in a cold room or buried in the snow.

Yet, in spite of the religious restrictions and many hours spent over the stove, Advent, with its joyous music, was a happy time.

Christmas Eve

Christmas Eve was charged with an electric atmosphere as the people of those times prepared to celebrate the coming of the Christ Child with fasting, confession and prayers — for, as they were often reminded, Christmas was, first of all, a religious holiday. Thus, those seeking special favours recited five Hail Marys every hour on the hour, from midday to midnight.

In the evening, the younger children would hang up their stockings and go to bed early, while the older ones would set up the Christmas tree, decorating it with garlands of silver and gold paper angels. Candles would be lit and a miniature nativity scene placed under the tree.

This custom of decorating a Christmas tree stemmed from the winter solstice

celebrations held in the Alsace region during the Middle Ages. In honour of this season, a pine tree would be cut and decorated with apples. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, this custom spread throughout Europe, and it was introduced to Canada in 1781 by General and Baroness von Riedesel.

Midnight mass

Around 11 o'clock, the sound of sleigh bells would resound throughout the night air and, bundled against the cold, families would ride to church for high mass, with its blend of solemnity and joyous celebration. Here they would worship, enthralled by the lights, the decorations, the manger and the carols. Afterwards, on the steps of the church, they would happily exchange greetings with the other parishioners.

On arriving home, and after warming themselves with a glass of whisky or sweet raisin wine, they would gather around the kitchen table for a simple but ample meal of pigs' feet, pâté and pies. An empty chair, left for the unexpected visitor, symbolized the Christmas spirit.

During the night or in the early morning, the children would find their stockings, each containing a small gift and, as a special treat, an orange. Years later, the scent of oranges would bring back memories of those times long ago.

Christmas Day

The whole family would join together for Christmas supper, along with friends and relatives from kilometres around, and together they would feast on turkey and, as a special treat, cranberry sauce. However, the highlight of the meal was dessert, which consisted of a Christmas cake in the shape of a Yule log and a plum pudding brought flaming to the table.

The Christmas log represented one of the oldest customs brought from the ancestral homeland, France. For example, to bestow blessings on the family, elaborate ceremonies surrounded the selection



Season's Greetings

Meilleurs Voeux



Public Archives Canada

La bénédiction du Jour de l'an (the New Year's visit) a colour print by Edmond Joseph Massicotte illustrates the old French-Canadian custom of the father blessing the family. Edmond Massicotte (1875-1929) is known for his prints showing scenes of daily life in French Canada.

of the log, the way in which it was burned in the fireplace and even the method by which the ashes were collected.

After supper, still other friends and relatives would stop by to offer their good wishes. Now, candies, nuts, raisins and orange sections would be set out, along with barley-sugar candies for the children. Drinks were offered; the music started and it was "on with the dancing", the quadrilles, cotillions, square dancing and minuets of the time.

Legends

The unique and sacred nature of Christmas engendered a whole series of legends, handed down from generation to generation, many of which were still believed at the turn of the century.

For example, one story told how, during Christmas night, the animals in the stables, sensing the special nature of the hour, bellowed and brayed the Christmas message or knelt and worshipped the newborn Child as they had that first Christmas. It was also said that the mountains opened, lighting up the sky with reflections of the treasures in their depths. Still another legend claimed that the dead rose and attended mass, offered by the

late priest of the parish kneeling at the foot of the cemetery cross.

Christmas day marked the beginning of a 12-day period culminating in the Feast of the Epiphany, a time more social than religious. Particular attention was paid to the weather of each of these 12 days, for it was believed that the same weather would be present during the corresponding month of the coming year.

Between Christmas and New Year's Day, two collections for the poor took place — one held on the Feast of the Infant Jesus, the other *La Guignolée* on New Year's Eve.

To collect alms for the Infant Jesus, the parish priest, wardens and sexton visited each home in the parish where the priest blessed the family. After a brief stop and a light meal, the canvassers accepted gifts, usually food and grain. These were entrusted to the priest for distribution to the poor or for sale through an auction held at the church doors.

La Guignolée, was reminiscent of a Druid ceremony rendered to the sun at the winter solstice. This ceremony had been adapted by Christians into an occasion to help the poor. Certain elements — such as the masquerade and a song, now a

song for the poor — were preserved.

La Guignolée began with young people dressed in costumes and carrying musical instruments, going from door to door singing "Good Evening Master and Mistress of the House, *La Guignolée* is at your service". They would then be invited in and served drinks and pastries. Following this, they were given food for the poor, frequently consisting of a *chignée*, the backbone of a freshly-killed pig.

In contrast to the collection made for the Infant Jesus, *la Guignolée* was very jovial — a fact particularly noticeable when two groups of *guignolées* would meet.

New Year's day

At dawn the children would ask for their father's blessing. This was an important element of the holiday, as can be seen by the fact that children living away from home and grandchildren always visited their family home at some point during the day to receive this patriarchal blessing.

After the family attended mass, the festivities began anew with the tables laden as generously as at Christmas. However, this day was dedicated mainly to exchanging visits with relatives friends and neighbours. Embraces and handshakes accompanied the season's greetings, often expressed as "Happy New Year and may you reach Paradise at the end of your days".

This was the day on which gifts were exchanged. The children, on their best behaviour because "he who cries on New Year's Day is red-eyed every day of the year", waited for their gifts from the Infant Jesus, St. Nicholas or, as a sign of changing times, Santa Claus.

After supper, the best musicians, dancers and singers vied with each other to entertain their guests.

The Feast of the Epiphany

On the Feast of the Epiphany the holiday continued. A cake containing a pea and a bean determined who would be "king" and "queen" for the day. They were responsible for starting the evening's dancing, which could continue all night.

The festive season ended on January 6 with Epiphany, but its spirit lingered on. In fact, in accordance with an old custom of suspending all heavy work during the cold season, it could be carried on until Shrove Tuesday.

(Article by Luce Vermette in Conservation Canada, Winter 1980.)

Minister heads delegation to Mexico

Secretary of State for External Affairs Mark MacGuigan has announced that he will lead the Canadian delegation to the fourth meeting of the Canada-Mexico Joint Ministerial Committee in Mexico City January 7-9, 1981. Three other Cabinet members will accompany Dr. MacGuigan — Agriculture Minister Eugene Whelan, Energy, Mines and Resources Minister Marc Lalonde and Minister of State for Trade Ed Lumley.

The ministers and officials will have three days of meetings with their Mexican counterparts, during which they will discuss a wide range of issues including trade, energy co-operation, agricultural co-operation as well as a variety of multi-lateral questions.

The Canada-Mexico Joint Ministerial Committee was formed in 1968 in recognition of the broad range of contacts between the two countries and of a mutual desire to foster the further development of relations. The January meeting will be the fourth, and the second one to take place in Mexico City.

In 1980, two-way trade between Canada and Mexico has grown rapidly, with Canadian exports in the first half of the year up by 126 per cent and imports up 57 per cent.

The number of high level contacts between the two countries both governmental and private, has also increased significantly in the past year or so. Close to a quarter of a million Canadian tourists now visit Mexico annually.

Niagara water pollution

The Canadian Embassy in Washington, D.C. sent a diplomatic note, November 28, to the United States Department of State concerning water quality problems in the Niagara River and their consequences for the health and property of Canadians.

The embassy also transmitted to the Department of State a summary of the Environmental Baseline Report on the Niagara River, prepared by Environment Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Environment for the Canada-Ontario Review Board on Water Quality.

The report summarizes Canadian data on water quality (suspended sediment), bottom sediment and biota collected in the Niagara River between 1975 and

1979. It states that concentrations of total DDT, PCB's, aldrin/dieldrin, endosulfan (thiodan), lindane and cadmium exceeded the specific objectives of the Canada-U.S. Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement at certain stations in the lower Niagara River on at least one occasion during 1979. In addition, other synthetic chemicals, for which no specific water quality objectives have been developed, were also detected.

In the note, the embassy said many of the chemicals detected are frequently found in association with incompletely treated wastes from industries operating in the vicinity of the Niagara River and this data give rise to additional and specific concerns on top of those which were indicated in another note sent by the embassy in April 1980.

Continuing risk

In particular, the Canadian government is concerned that serious operational problems are still being experienced at the Niagara Falls (New York) Waste Water Treatment Plant and that agreement does not appear to have been reached between the United States Environmental Protection Agency and Niagara Falls officials to proceed with rehabilitation of this plant, said the note. The embassy reiterated the government's concerns that there may exist a continuing risk to the health and property of Canadians and sought assurances that urgent steps be taken to resolve any administrative difficulties which might further delay the rehabilitation of the Niagara Falls Waste Water Treatment Plant.

Information requested

Secondly, while U.S. agencies have provided general information regarding the operations of SCA Chemical Waste Services, Inc., and their possible impact on the water quality of the Niagara River, recent disclosures reported in the Canadian press relating to past actions at the site give rise to further concerns. The Canadian authorities wish to request further information on this matter, said the embassy.

In the note, the Canadian embassy said it welcomed the expression of willingness in the Department of State's note of May 21 to co-operate in seeking a solution to these problems. It said the embassy would be pleased to discuss the findings of the report and any other information regarding pollution sources to the Niagara River.

Former Quebec premier dies

Former Quebec Premier Jean Lesage described as the "father of the Quiet Revolution" in the 1960s, died of cancer, December 11, in Quebec City. Mr. Lesage was 68.

"Jean Lesage will go down in history as the father of the Quiet Revolution, but it is an expression which doesn't nearly begin to sum up what he was," Quebec Liberal opposition leader Claude Ryan said as he announced the death in the National Assembly, December 12.

All of Quebec will regret the loss of the father of the Quiet Revolution, Quebec Premier René Lévesque said in a message to the Lesage family.

In Ottawa, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau said that Mr. Lesage was "one of those who most greatly contributed towards the affirmation of Quebec within Confederation".

Mr. Lesage's body lay in state in the Red Room of the National Assembly in Quebec City for three days prior to the funeral in the Quebec Cathedral.

Social reforms

During the Lesage regime from July 1960 to June 1966, the Quebec school system underwent a complete restructuring, a provincial pension plan was introduced, hydro power was nationalized, spending controls in government were implemented, electoral reform was enacted and the civil service union was organized.

Mr. Lesage began his political career on the federal level in 1945 when he was elected Liberal member of Parliament for the Quebec riding of Montmagny-Islet. By 1952 he was parliamentary secretary to Lester B. Pearson, then Minister of External Affairs. In 1953, Mr. Lesage became a member of the Louis St. Laurent Cabinet, serving briefly as Minister of Resources and Economic Development, then as Minister of Resources and for the North.

Although he retained his seat in the 1958 general election, Mr. Lesage left federal politics in June 1958, shortly after he had been chosen head of the Quebec Liberals. For the next two years he ran the party from outside the National Assembly. Mr. Lesage served as his own finance minister for both terms he was premier and also held the federal-provincial affairs portfolio from 1961-1966.

The year 1980 in pictures — some of the events on the Canadian scene



Top photos (left to right) Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau was returned to office following the February 18 election victory of the Liberal Party — This year again Canada accepted Southeast Asian refugees — Jules Léger, who was Canada's twenty-first governor general serving from 1974-1979, died November 22 — Saskatchewan celebrated the seventy-fifth anniversary of its entry into the Canadian Confederation — Dancers Evelyn Hart and David Peregrine of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet won gold and bronze medals respectively at the International Ballet Competition in Varna, Bulgaria. Centre photos (left to right) For the first time in the history of the House of Commons, a woman, Jeanne Sauv , was named Speaker of the House — Another western province, Alberta, celebrated the seventy-fifth anniversary of

its entry into Confederation — Ken Taylor, then Canada's ambassador to Iran, helped six American diplomats to escape from Iran — On July 1, Governor-General Edward Schreyer signed the royal proclamation making O Canada the national anthem — Montreal was the host for the first Floralties held in North America. Bottom photos (left to right) Secretary of State for External Affairs Mark MacGuigan participated in a number of meetings at the United Nations — Twenty-two year old Terry Fox undertook a cross-Canada "marathon of hope", raising \$20 million for cancer research — NRC's Dr. Saran Narang reproduced human insulin — Bell Canada, the primary Canadian telephone company, marked its-one-hundredth anniversary — Intelpost, the first electronic mail service, was inaugurated.

Delegation at NATO meeting

Secretary of State for External Affairs Mark MacGuigan recently led a Canadian delegation to the regular Fall Ministerial Session of the North Atlantic Council in Brussels, Belgium, December 11-12.

The foreign ministers of the countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) met at a time when the cohesion of the Alliance and its capability for deterrence and defence seemed all the more important for stability in Europe and world peace.

Attention at the Brussels meeting focused on the present state of East-West relations in the light of the continuing Soviet presence in Afghanistan, prospects for the CSCE Follow-up Meeting in Madrid, and close consultation and cooperation among the NATO allies on matters relating to their common interests, bearing in mind that these interests can be affected by the troubled situation in other parts of the world.

Christmas cards of yesteryear on new postage stamps

The first Canadian-designed Christmas cards have been reproduced on this year's Yuletide postage stamps.

"This year's Christmas stamps are especially beautiful because they are reproductions of some of the first Christmas cards produced in this country," said Postmaster-General André Ouellette. "As such they can serve both as postage and bearers of good tidings."

In 1931, artist A.Y. Jackson convinced William E. Coultts, the Toronto greeting card magnate, to create a series of cards in typical Canadian style. Mr. Coultts commissioned 26 Canadian artists, including members of the Group of Seven, and paid them \$25 for each design.



The layout design and typography for this stamp issue were done by Yvon Laroche of Montreal. Ashton-Potter Limited of Toronto has printed 95 million of the 15-cent stamps, 65 million of the 17-cent stamps and 19 million of the 35-cent stamps in four-colour lithography.

Ski team does well in World Cup

The Canadian men's downhill ski team opened their World Cup season recently in Val d'Isère, posting one of the best team results in World Cup history when five of the team's skiers placed in the top seven placings.

Austrian Uli Speiss won the downhill but the Canadian team led by Calgary's Ken Read filled the next four spots, an unprecedented feat in international skiing.

Read of Calgary was followed by Steve Podborski, 23, of Toronto; Chris Kent, 19, of Calgary; and Dave Irwin, 26, of Vernon, British Columbia. David Murray, 27, of Whistler, British Columbia finished in seventh position.

Speiss raced down the shortened 3,250-metre course in 2:00.15 followed by Read at 2:00.52, Podborski, 2:00.71, Kent, 2:01.24 and Irwin 2:01.33. Murray's time was 2:01.81.

In women's skiing at Val d'Isère, Kathy Kreiner of Timmins, Ontario,

finished second behind Marie-Thérèse Nadig of Switzerland in the downhill, the opening event of the World Cup ski season.

Kreiner, 23, who won an Olympic gold medal in the giant slalom in 1976 at Innsbruck, Austria, finished the 3,298-metre course in 1:34.07. Kreiner is racing as an independent, although she is listed as a member of the Canadian women's ski team for official entry purposes.

Cod catches to end

Canada and France have reached agreement on the maximum annual cod catches French vessels will be permitted to take in the Gulf of St. Lawrence until May 15, 1986, Secretary of State for External Affairs Mark MacGuigan and Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Roméo LeBlanc have announced. Beyond the 1986 date, vessels from Metropolitan France will no longer be permitted to fish in the Gulf.

The agreement reached will limit French catches of Gulf-based cod stocks to an annual maximum of 20,500 metric tons for the period 1981-1986. This limit may be reduced if total allowable catch limits for the two Gulf-based cod stocks are reduced below current levels. However, this is not foreseen as likely. (The French limit for 1980 was 20,540 metric tons and for 1979 20,675.)

The agreement also gives Canada the option to require the French vessels to take up to 8,500 metric tons of their annual entitlement from the southern Gulf cod stock, with a view to sharing the burden of the French fishery equitably between Canadian fishermen who fish in the north and those who fish in the south.

"The 1972 agreement was very unclear regarding quantification of French fishing rights up to 1986," Dr. MacGuigan said. "The 1980 agreement settles that issue, and should contribute to the furtherance of the good relations we have with France."

Mr. LeBlanc pointed out that the agreement ensures that further development of the Gulf cod stocks will be for the benefit of Canada. The stocks are rebuilding and it is expected that over the next six years total allowable catches will be well above the 1980 levels of 75,000 metric tons for the northern Gulf cod stock, and 54,000 metric tons for the southern stock.



The Christmas card design used on the 17-cent stamp is by Joseph Sydney Hallam, who was born in Manchester, England, in 1898 and settled in Toronto in 1910. His illustration shows a *Sleigh Ride*, a popular winter pastime before roads were swept bare for the automobile. Frank Charles Hennessey, whose work appears on the 15-cent stamp, was born in Ottawa in 1894. His contribution to the greeting card series is called *Christmas Morning* and shows the inhabitants of a Gatineau village on their way to church. The Christmas card illustration used on the 35-cent stamp is by Kathleen Morris, who was born in Montreal in 1893. For the 1931 card series she provided *McGill Cab Stand*, a nostalgic view of old Montreal in winter.

News of the arts

The Christmas collection of the Public Archives of Canada

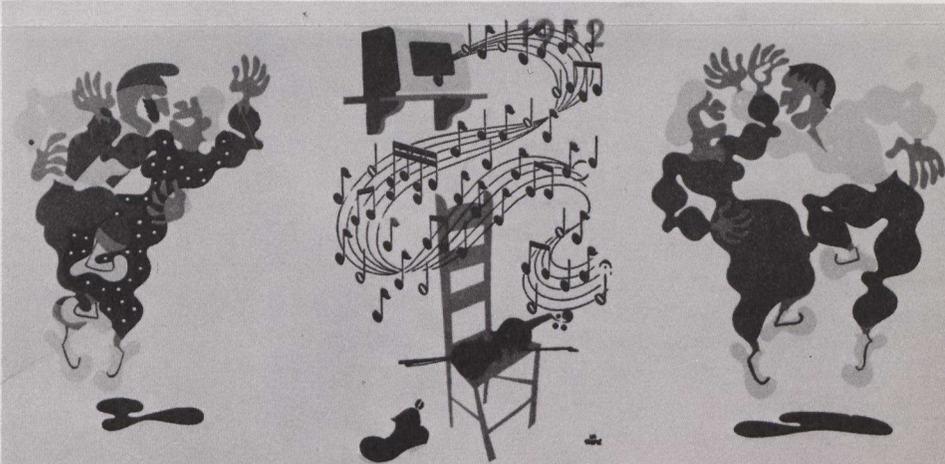
The Public Archives of Canada has, as part of its holdings, about 300 Christmas cards designed and made by Canadian artists.

The Archives collection includes cards by such Canadian artists as A.Y. Jackson, Lawren Harris, Alfred Pellan and Robert LaPalme.

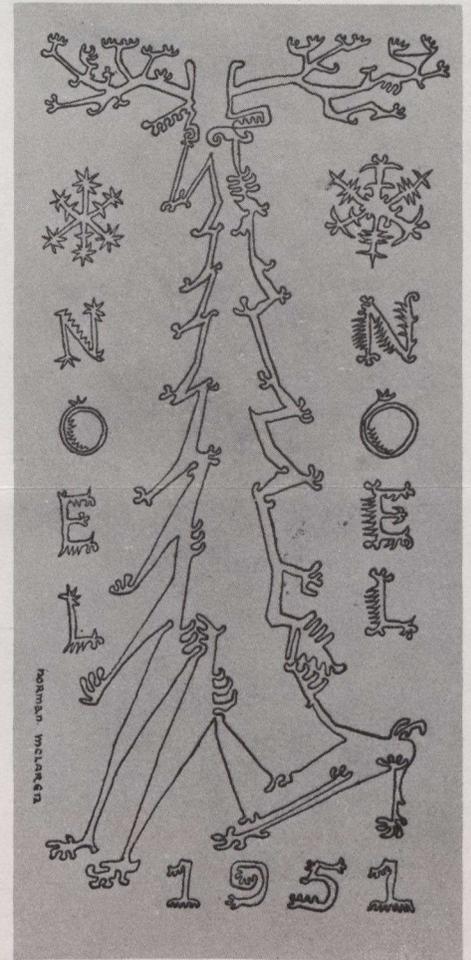
The picture division of the Archives has acquired a number of cards from private collections such as the H.O. and Dorothy McCurry Collection. As an employee of the National Gallery of Canada

from 1919 and its director from 1939 to 1955, Harry Orr McCurry received over the years hundreds of greeting cards designed and made by Canadian artists.

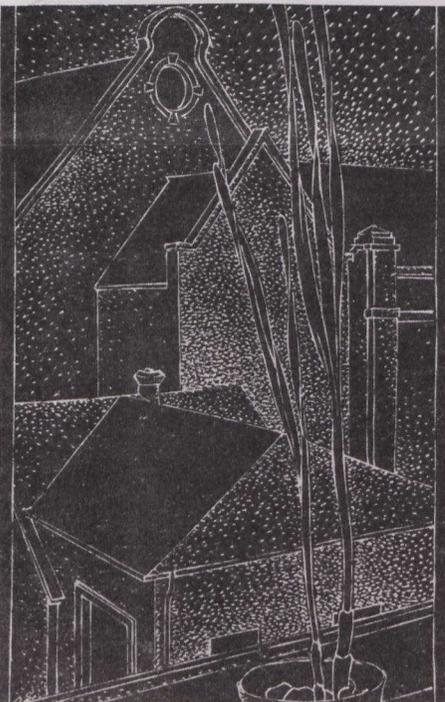
"Cards by Fritz Brandtner, Robert Bruce and Lowrie Warrener sent to McCurry during the Second World War are particularly interesting," said archivist Lydia Foy. "These three artists have expressed their intense feelings about the war by depicting the carnage and machines of destruction alongside traditional Christmas symbols."



CHERS AMIS, SOYEZ HEUREUX AVEC REDIFFUSION JUSQU'À LA FIN DE VOS JOURS
A Christmas card designed by Canadian artist Robert LaPalme (1908-1952); a photo process print.



A Christmas card by Norman McLaren (1914-), a photo process print.



Card by L.L. Fitzgerald; partial view.



Card by Fritz Brandtner (1896-1969) created during the Second World War.

Recipe for New Year's punch



Take yourself.

Peel off layers of egotism and self-pity;

Cut out seeds of unkind thoughts and unhappy emotions;

Remove all prejudices and worries.

To this, add:

One firm belief that life's worth living.

Mix well with one practical idea that you are somebody;

Season with a sense of humour and optimism.

Sweeten with love.

Then add one strong determination to live

At your highest, every hour of the day,

Come what may.

Let effervesce for 365 days.

Garnish with smiles and pleasant words.

Serve with gentleness and courage.

Note the effect.

(From Deductions (Revenue Canada) January 1980.)

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Alguns artigos desta publicação são também editados em português sob o título Notícias do Canadá.

News briefs

Western Forest Products Limited of Vancouver will spend at least \$300 million in the next five years to modernize its British Columbia plants and increase its forestry staff by at least 25 per cent, president James Buttar says. The announcement follows the recent sale of Western Forest Products — formerly Rayonier Canada Limited — to British Columbia Forest Products and Whonnock Industries Limited, both of Vancouver, and Doman Industries Limited of Duncan, British Columbia.

Alberta's Energy Resources Conservation Board has given its approval to a \$255-million methanol plant proposed by Celanese Canada Limited on the outskirts of Edmonton. The board has recommended Celanese be granted a two-year permit to use 800 million cubic metres of natural gas a year to make 700,000 tonnes of methanol.

Paul J. Cotter, resident vice-president and senior representative, Bank of Montreal, was recently elected president of the Câmara de Comércio Brasil-Canadá (Brazil-Canada Chamber of Commerce) in São Paulo. He succeeds Sergio Ruiz Cavalcanti de Albuquerque, vice-president finance, Alcan Alumínio do Brasil S.A., who remains on the Câmara slate of officers as first vice-president. The Câmara has a corporate membership of more than 200.

The Solicitor General of Canada Bob Kaplan has announced that an additional 128 RCMP man-years will be committed to provincial, territorial and municipal policing. The RCMP provides policing services to all provinces except Ontario and Quebec, as well as providing the police forces in the territories and 193 municipalities, where the costs are shared between the respective levels of government.

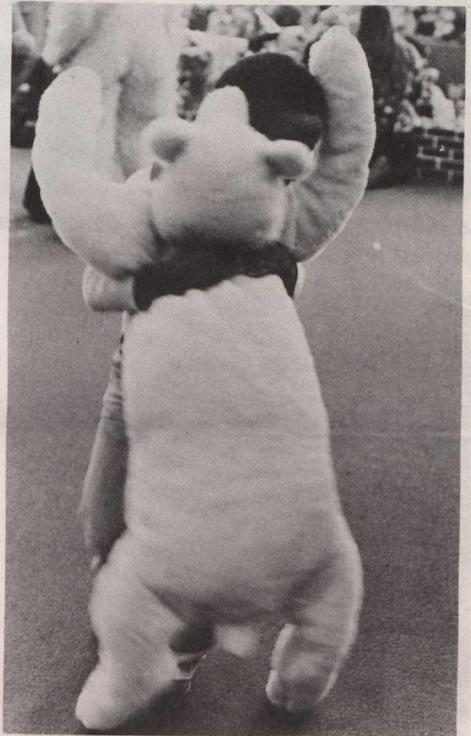
Canadian nuclear scientist Harry G. Thode has been presented with the Arthur L. Day Medal by the Geological Society of America. The medal, recognizing outstanding achievement and inspiration to others, was presented to Dr. Thode, a chemistry professor at McMaster University in Hamilton.

The Board of Directors of the Export Development Corporation (EDC) has approved loans of \$234 million and insurance and related guarantees of \$33.2 million to support prospective export sales and investments in 12 countries:

Algeria, Cameroun, Chile, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, Mexico, Morocco, Peru, Thailand, Uruguay, U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. The transactions involve such goods and services as automotive parts, engineering services, a rural power distribution system and aircraft.

Bombardier Incorporated of Montreal has received a \$4-million contract from Belgium's Ministry of Defence to supply 611 motorcycles along with spare parts. The cycles, which are designed for both road and off-road use, will be delivered to the Belgian Army in the first half of 1981.

Clyde Gray, considered one of Canada's premier boxers during the last decade, has retired from the sport to become boxing supervisor for the Ontario Athletic Commission. Gray, Canadian and Commonwealth welter-weight champion, will assume responsibilities for sanctioning bouts, as well as licensing fighters, judges and referees.



"All right, all right, I give in!," this big teddy bear seems to be saying to the little boy who has the tables turned and has him in the bear hug. The National Museum of Natural Sciences in Ottawa, again this year, has invited children not only to visit the museum's display of teddy bears this Christmas but also to participate by entering their own teddy bears in the exhibit.

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