

Business Page

New partnership will end "Soviet-style monopolism"



Your Business
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Thomson News Service

Last time CNCP Telecommunications tried to get into the long-distance telephone business, it was slapped down by federal regulators. That was in 1985. CNCP is a subsidiary of giant Canadian Pacific Ltd. of Toronto.

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission said consumers would pay if CNCP was allowed to compete with Bell Canada. Bell has a monopoly on the telephone business in Canada.

Bell's highly lucrative long-distance business subsidizes residential telephone service, Bell argued. The CRTC agreed, as did the Consumers Association of Canada.

Four years later, CNCP has come back with an impressive partner, Rogers Communications Inc. The two companies plan to tie CNCP's ground and satellite network to Roger's cable and cellular telephone system.

Ted Rogers, the cable company's visionary founder, would be in charge of the new joint venture. The company has yet to be named. Allowing the new partnership to take on Bell would put an end to "Soviet-style communications monopolism," Mr. Rogers told a news conference in Toronto.

STILL A QUESTION

Under the plan, Rogers Communications would buy 40 per cent of CNCP for between \$250 million

and \$275 million. It would then spend between \$750 million and \$1.5 billion building its communications network.

With luck and federal approval, the new venture could be in business in a couple years, Mr. Rogers predicts. It could be profitable by 1999.

This is a battle between two giants if ever there was one. Bell's parent, BCE Inc., and CNCP's parent, Canadian Pacific, are two of the largest corporate empires in the country. CNCP has been itching for a share of the \$6-billion long-distance business.

The last time the question came up, Bell had little trouble persuading regulators that it was in the public interest to let it keep its monopoly. This time, Bell is resigned to losing, analysts say.

That has not stopped it from repeating its position, which the CAC still shares. "If we have competition in the long-distance marketplace, the overall phone bill for 90 per cent of telephone subscribers will rise," says David McKendry of the Consumers Association of Canada.

MAYBE, MAYBE NOT

When the Americans broke up their long-distance monopoly, long-distance rates fell and residential rates stayed about the same, analysts note. That's not to say U.S. deregulation was an unqualified blessing. Service problems and thousands of layoffs clouded the event.

Whether deregulation would work for Canada is something we cannot know in advance.

Mr. Rogers has been sitting with \$1.6 billion in his pocket since he sold his U.S. cable business. His willingness to use the money to build something new is inspiring.

Ontario Hydro will benefit from sharing information

Nuclear power plant operators worldwide will benefit from better sharing of information when the World Association of Nuclear Operators (WANO) is officially formed next month in Moscow, Ontario Hydro Chairman and President Robert Franklin said recently.

The formation of the World Association of Nuclear Operators marks the first time utilities around the world have agreed to provide ongoing operating information about their nuclear plants, Mr. Franklin said. Commitment by the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries to exchange information about their operating experience is especially significant, he added.

"The goal of this organization is to help ensure safe, reliable nuclear power operations around

the globe by improving and strengthening the exchange of nuclear information. To succeed, all the utilities must make an effort to learn from the experience and expertise of others," Mr. Franklin said.

At the inaugural meeting of WANO in Moscow, May 14-19, a charter for the organization will be signed by 130 participating utilities.

The decision to form a world organization of utilities was made in the wake of the Chernobyl accident. WANO is based on another organization, the Institute of Nuclear Power Operations, which was set up after the accident of Three Mile Island to improve the exchange of information in the United States.

WANO will consist of four

regional centres with a co-ordinating office in London. Utilities may belong to the regional centre of their choice: Atlanta, Moscow, Paris or Tokyo. Ontario Hydro, Hydro-Quebec and New Brunswick Power are joining WANO as a group. The Canadian utilities are a member of the Atlanta region along with utilities from the United States, Mexico and Yugoslavia. Mr. Franklin is the first chairman of the Atlanta Centre Governing Board and will represent the centre in Moscow.

Member utilities in each region will be linked by computer through their regional centres. The four centres are also connected by computer so information can be easily exchanged with utilities from other regions.

Town spends budget surplus

The Town of Halton Hills 1988 financial report presented last week shows a \$100,000 surplus.

But town treasurer Ray King says the money is already spent. "The first \$100,000 of the surplus would be carried forward to reduce the taxes in the following year," he said Monday.

The town came in under budget with general administration, the fire department, planning and development and recreation and cultural services, for a total of \$600,000. The town report says \$500,000 of that total went to the unallocated capital reserve account.

The town went over budget last year for supplementary taxes, interests earned, permits, and financing and spent over budget on transportation projects and services and building department costs.

The 1988 surplus is considered for general town purposes.

The town commissioned the accounting firm of Goebelle,

MacAdam, Alexander to prepare last year's financial report.

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Civic Centre donations meeting is postponed

The Halton Hills Civic Centre Donations Committee May 4 meeting has been postponed until May 9.

The committee was originally scheduled to meet at the Georgetown Cultural Centre May 4, but will meet instead May 9, 7 p.m. at the Cultural Centre.

The committee was established to raise funds for Halton Hills' new

town centre on Maple Avenue near Trafalgar Road, scheduled to open in June.

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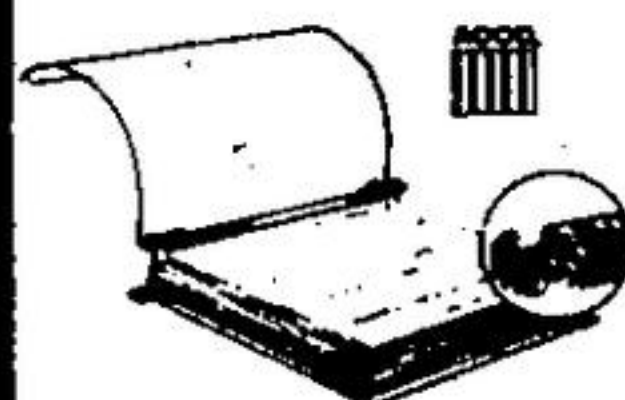
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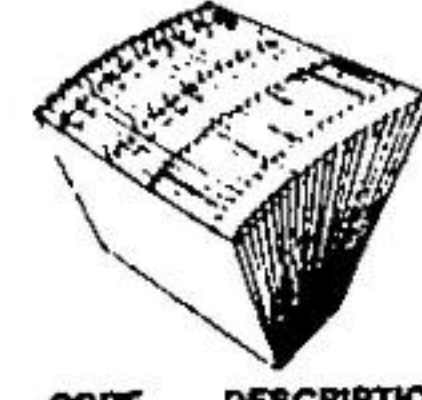
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