

1983: World Communications Year

By H.D. Markell

On November 19, 1981, the United Nations General Assembly, in consultation with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the Economic and Social Council and other specialized agencies, officially proclaimed 1983 as World Communications Year and called upon all nations to develop an awareness of the importance of communications and transport. The theme of the Year is "Development of Communications Infrastructures," with particular emphasis on the needs of the developing countries.

In recent years, all people have become more aware of the important role played by telecommunications and their networks. They are the basis for social, cultural and economic progress and are an essential part of the infrastructure of administration. Telecommunications — high-quality national and international voice circuits, telex, maritime and aeronautical radio communication services, data transmission, sound and TV broadcasting services, international cable and satellite communication links — place people of all nations in contact with one another and with the events and peoples of the world.

The cornerstone of the system is international co-operation, essential for ensuring the smooth functioning of the world telecommunications network. This co-operation has enabled all the telecommunication systems developed over the past century to be gradually extended to the public as a whole, and in future will pave the way to a more equitable distribution throughout the world of those facilities that draw mankind together by overcoming time and distance and eliminating even psychological barriers.

With this in mind, the UN General Assembly declared "that a World Communications Year would provide the opportunity for all countries to undertake an in-depth review and analysis of their communications policies and stimulate the accelerated development of communications infrastructures."

The International Telecommunication Union has been designated the lead UN agency for the worldwide preparation and celebration of World Communications Year (WCY) 1983, with responsibility for co-ordinating the activities of its 157 member countries. Founded in 1865, the ITU is the world's oldest inter-governmental organization, and is the UN's specialized agency responsible for planning, regulating, co-ordinating and standardizing international communications. It operates in the spirit of "give and take", with member countries exchanging information and assistance.

The General Assembly urges governments and private organizations and all communications users to participate actively in WCY 83, and to co-operate with the Secretary General of the ITU in attaining these principal objectives of the Year:

- to increase the scope and effectiveness of communications as a force for economic, cultural and social development;
- to stress the expansion and refinement of communications infrastructures;
- to promote the development of a complete worldwide communications network, so that no one will be isolated from the local, national or international community;
- to call for harnessing all resources to accomplish the objectives; and
- to focus on the analysis, planning and development of national communications infrastructures in all countries to meet their communications needs.

On May 17, in announcing plans for WCY on the occasion of the 14th World Telecommunications Day, Francis Fox, called

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upon governments and the private sector to co-operate in Canada's participation. "Because of our expertise in all aspects of communications technology, Canadians are in a unique position to contribute to international development and undoubtedly will wish to play an active role in promoting the Year," Mr. Fox said.

The activities of WCY 83 will be conducted on three levels — national, regional and international — but the focus will be placed on activities at the national level. For the success of the Year, national committees should be organized to formulate and implement a program of activities and to co-ordinate them with regional and world programs. They should feature wide representation from government and non-government organizations, including posts and telecommunications, radio, television, press and films, transport, industry, health, agriculture, education, national planning groups, users' associations, professional associations, radio amateurs, and others.

Through the establishment of national committees, each country will define its own needs, identify the obstacles that impede the balanced development of communications, propose solutions to overcome them, and explore ways of translating the decisions into reality.

All the activities associated with the WCY program are to be financed on a voluntary basis. Contributions of all kinds are needed: money, equipment, services, expertise, and others. It is the responsibility of the national committees to secure funds for their activities, except for certain projects financed by international aid.

Programs for the year comprise three types of activity: specific projects, seminars and symposia, and information activities. Participants may act alone on a project, or work in conjunction with other organizations. They may take responsibility for a complete project or a specific part of a project.

Many international organizations such as the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the Universal Postal Union (UPU), and the World Health Organization (WHO) have recognized the inherent educational opportunities of World Communications Year and have planned projects, seminars, conferences and other activities during 1983 to complement other WCY projects.

The ITU has prepared a list of pilot projects involving assistance to many Third World countries in implementing various types of communications projects, including training, maintenance, frequency monitoring, network planning and broadcasting facilities.

Priority technologies for these projects for which Canadian manufacturers are available are fibre-optic distribution systems, digital local switching, digital subscriber carriage, subscriber radio and satellite single-carrier-per-channel systems for remote telephony.

Activities in these areas would promote long-term beneficial relationships between Canada and Third World countries by encouraging co-operative research and development and manufacturing. However, obstacles will be encountered, such as developing systems to operate in areas where the climate is adverse, training local technicians, and the absence of a dependable power supply.

In Canada, a national steering committee has been set up, under the chairmanship of John Gilbert, Director of International Arrangements, Department of Communications, to prepare for Canada's participation. The committee includes representatives from industry as well as federal and provincial governments and other interested associations.

To date, the committee has identified nine possible projects to be sponsored by organizations such as Teleglobe, the CBC, Canada Post, and others. One example is a proposal brought forward by the Ontario Ministry of Transport and Communications for development of rural telephone systems in Third World countries. There are an estimated 550 million telephones

in the world, but 75% of these are in eight developed countries only, and rural telephone service is considered essential to economic development.

The young people of the world will also be given an opportunity to participate in the celebration of World Communications Year. A worldwide photo and drawing competition, "Youth in the Electronic Age," will be launched during the fall of 1982. The competition is open to young people from 8 to 18 years of age, and entrants will be divided into three age-groups. The theme will be "Telecommunications for Everyone." Photographs, drawings, paintings and illustrations should develop the theme and show how young people imagine the role telecommunications will play in their world.

Stimulating an awareness among youth of the impact of communications infrastructures on today's society is very important, because they will become the scientists, engineers, educators, policy-makers and users of tomorrow, and will be ultimately responsible for the continued development of

communications for the benefit of mankind.

The youth art competition was first organized in 1971, during the first World Telecommunications Exhibition, TELECOM 71, and has since become one of the highlights of TELECOM. The prize winners in the WCY 83 competition will be announced and displayed during TELECOM 83, to be held in Geneva, October 26 to November 1, 1983.

Mankind will be increasingly affected by the explosive and imbalanced development of communications infrastructures. Only if the balance is redressed by a fairer distribution of facilities and a better co-ordination of their development can the economic and social needs of all nations be met.

World Communications Year will not provide solutions to all the problems. But, in mobilizing the whole world community to the need to develop communications infrastructures, it will mark the beginning of a new era when all nations can benefit from the services provided by these equitably developed systems. □

AMTEC ANNUAL ELECTIONS

Nominations are requested for the elections to be held in 1983 to fill three positions on the AMTEC Board.

The positions are:

1. Vice-President (President-Elect)

This is a three year term, beginning in June, 1983 at the Annual Conference. There will be one year as Vice-President, one year as President and one year as Immediate Past President.

2. Secretary-Treasurer

This is a three year term beginning at the Annual Conference in June, 1983.

3. Member-at-Large

This is a three year term beginning at the Annual Conference in June, 1983.

Procedure

1. If you wish to nominate someone:

Nominations may be made by any five AMTEC Members providing the nominee is a member of AMTEC and has signified his/her willingness in writing. A brief biographical sketch of the nominee must be sent to the Chairman of the Nominating Committee along with the nomination.

2. If you wish to be nominated:

Indicate this to five AMTEC members who will arrange to nominate you by sending a letter of their intention and your biographical sketch to the Chairman of the Nominating Committee. You must be a member of AMTEC.

All nominations must be received by the Chairman of the Nominating Committee by February 1, 1983.

Send nominations to: **Lou T. Wise**
Chairman, Nominating Committee
Past President, AMTEC
c/o The Toronto Board of Education
155 College Street
Toronto, Ontario M5T 1P6

EDITOR'S NOTE: This issue of CJEC will not be delivered in time for AMTEC members to make nominations before February 1. While the editor cannot change policy, it is nevertheless suggested that readers disregard the deadline and submit nominations as soon as possible.