



Round the world

OTTAWA INUIT LAND RIGHTS

In a landmark victory for tribal peoples, the Canadian government has agreed to create a new territory to settle land claims by its eskimos. The new territory, 2m square kilometers, will be roughly one-fifth of Canada's land mass and five times the size of California.

Called Nunavut, the territory will be home for 17,500 eskimo Inuit. The Inuit will also receive C\$1.15 billion (£580m) over 14 years, to settle the claim for land against the federal government.

The Inuit have to accept the deal in a plebiscite. "If this deal is ratified we'll extinguish our aboriginal title to other lands and waters within the Northwest Territories," explained Tagak Curley, chief negotiator for the Tungavik Federation.

Strong opposition is expected from the Assembly of First Nations, which represents 500,000 Indians. One of their advisers, John Ama-goalik, fears the deal would actual damage their attempts to rescue eskimo culture.

HONG KONG SPECULATION BOOSTS STOCK EXCHANGE

Speculation in residential property is causing concern for the government. Despite efforts to curb activity in the property market, the number of apartments that changed hands in 1991 was almost 40% up on the previous year, according to Registrar General Noel Gleeson. The government blames sky-high property prices as a major

cause of the double-digit inflation.

A fall in interest rates caused the current phase of property speculation, according to London brokers Save & Prosper. The property boom, in turn, encouraged the stock market.

MOSCOW - EPITAPH

Mikhail Gorbachev wrote the epitaph for the Communist Party when he declared, in his last address to the Soviet Union:

"Destiny so ruled that, when I found myself at the helm of this state, it already was clear that something was wrong. We had a lot of everything - land, oil and gas, other natural resources - and there was intellect and talent in abundance. However, we were living much worse than people in the industrialised countries. The reason was obvious. This country was suffocating in the shackles of the bureaucratic command system. Doomed to cater to ideology, and suffer and carry the onerous burden of the arms race, it found itself at breaking point."

LONG ISLAND LAND STOLEN

Columbia University professor of environmental law Frank Grad was puzzled when a garbage hauling company was indicted for stealing state land worth over \$1m. - the company persistently dumped rubbish on land belonging to a hospital. The professor told *The New York Times*: "There seems to be one of the normal rules of law that you can't steal land."

HANOI FREE MARKET?

Ideological gymnastics underpin Vietnam's draft of a new constitution, which reaffirms one-party Communist rule but claims to introduce the free market. The draft ends guaranteed rights - such as to work, housing, education and health care. The state would retain ownership of land but allocate plots to individual users.

BRAZIL DWARFISM AND LAND

Politicians usually argue over the issue of land reform in terms of property rights and economic efficiency: the human costs of a malfunctioning land-use system are rarely counted. Yet in Brazil the human costs can be measured with scientific precision.

Over 44 million people are officially classified as of stunted growth - the result of hunger. The highest percentage of dwarfs live in the northeast, where men eke out a pitiful living under the threat of death from the guns of hired killers who are employed by cattle ranchers.

Medical research has now revealed that men under 4ft 10ins - the average height of Africa's pygmies - are common in the north east.

Yet Brazil is one of the bread-baskets of the world. As Latin America's largest economy, last year she exported food worth £4.2 billion. One of the country's top nutrition experts says that "Brazil could feed almost half the world and yet it can't even feed its own people."

A variety of explanations are offered for a recent decline in agricultural productivity,

from the cut in subsidies to last year's drought. But these do not offer a fundamental explanation, for a paediatrician, Dr. Meraldo Zisman - he is researching the problem for a book - is quoted by the London Observer as stating: "In the past 30 years not only height, but also weight, thorax size and brain content have been falling in the north-east."

The explanation is to be found in the way Brazil condones the misuse of its fertile soil in the south, where hundreds of thousands of acres on latifundia are allowed to lie fallow by landlords who refuse access to landless peasants.

Result: families suffering from malnutrition head north - where they contribute to the over-exploitation of the Amazon basin - or seek refuge in the urban slums, there to forage for food on the rubbish dumps.

BRUSSELS ID FOR COWS

The European Commission wants to count every field and farm animal in Europe. The proposal stems from plans to switch from price support to direct "compensation" worth £7 billion a year, to be allocated on the basis of the size of a farmer's land and flocks.

The new Domesday Book is criticised by Britain's agricultural minister, John Gummer, as "in the realm of science fiction."

EEC farm commissioner Ray MacSharry wants payments to be made direct to farmers.

The formula to prevent fraud would mean that every cow in Europe would have to have a special identification tag.

News in Brief

