



## 35 die as gales hammer Britain, Europe



**CLINGING DESPERATELY** to rope, 15-year-old Jesse Rodriguez inches his way to safety over thin ice of lake near Racine, Wis. Jesse was walking across small lake to meet a friend when ice gave way. Members of Mount Pleasant rescue squad came to his aid with ropes and ladders. He escaped injury.

### Trees fall like ninepins

Sun News Dispatches

LONDON — Winds topping 100 miles an hour smashed into the British Isles and continental Europe Friday night and early today, killing at least 35 persons, wrecking crops, sinking boats, causing floods and wiping out electricity and communications in large areas.

At least 24 gale-related deaths were reported in Britain alone, and a London

Storm picture, page 3

weather centre official called it the strongest windstorm in 29 years.

A Royal Auto Club spokesman compared many areas to "a giant bowling alley with trees littered like ninepins all over the roadway."

In Denmark police ordered the immediate evacuation of two towns and a large area of low-lying land in the southwest after the North Sea broke through several dikes and threatened disastrous floods.

More than 20,000 people were reported fleeing their homes.

Dikes keeping the sea at bay in the Netherlands were reported holding, but police there said high winds killed two persons — an elderly woman blown from her balcony and a motorcyclist swept in front of a car.

Naval helicopters rescued 22 seamen from storm-tossed ships in the lower Elbe River as the howling winds peaked at 112 miles an hour, leaving a trail of wreckage and at least seven dead in West Germany.

West German weather bureau officials described the storm as the worst since 1962, when a tide 23 feet above normal flooded the city of Hamburg.

Hurricane force gusts hit northern France, tearing off roofs, smashing windows and sending vehicles tumbling like dry leaves, especially in the Lille area.

One 60-year-old man was reported to have died of fright when snapped power cables sent out a shower of sparks on the street near him. One death was reported in Belgium.

The westerly winds brought unseasonably warm temperatures to ski resort areas in Switzerland and Austria, and winter vacationers were reported leaving for home in the rain.

The gales left scores of thousands of people without electricity in many areas of England, and a farmers union spokesman said damage to early lettuce and tomato

"Britain" page 2

### Huge loot cache found by police

West Vancouver police are sorting through a cache of stolen goods recovered from a house in British Properties.

Chief Constable J. J. Hornell said Friday a preliminary estimate put the value of the recovered goods at \$22,300.

Charges of possession of stolen property are pending against one man, police said. Detectives have taken over the police indoor firing range as they sort through 95 items recovered from the house at 650 Parkside Road on Christmas Eve.

The police chief said most of the items appear to have been stolen from the Greater Vancouver area, but he indicated some of the goods may have been stolen from other provinces and taken to West Vancouver.

Among the items are two electric typewriters, each valued at \$1,000 by the police; a dozen eight-track stereo tape decks taken from cars; a number of radios; several TV sets, a large number of expensive electronic calculators and a large number of telephones and phone equipment.

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### BARRETT OUTRAGED

#### ICBC rates called callous and shocking

Shocking, callous and impossible — those were typical reactions Friday to the new Social Credit government's announcement that auto insurance rates will rise by up to three-fold on March 1.

Former premier Dave Barrett strode into the legislative press gallery in Victoria and, in an impromptu press conference, said the rate increases represent a "complete sellout" by the Social Credit government to U.S. insurance companies.

"Shocking is the minimal word I can use to describe this," said Barrett.

He said people in the hinterland of the province who had been forced under private auto insurance to pay extra regional penalties now are back in the same situation.

"Those people in the north who voted to return Social Credit are the first ones to get kicked in the teeth for returning that government," he charged.

Barrett said the only way outside insurance companies can compete with ICBC is by having rates set by the Crown corporation dramatically increased.

"More than ever now we need to know who paid for those advertisements during the election campaign," Barrett said.

The former premier was referring to a series of radio and television ads sponsored by unidentified private insurance companies.

The unidentified companies condemned ICBC and urged that they be given a chance to come back into the province.

Barrett said the loss of the equalization of territorial rates means the people of the north are right back where they started and he added that the young drivers of the province face "huge increases."

Barrett said the NDP's plan to transfer \$150 million in gas tax money was set for next year and has been acknowledged by Social Credit.

"But rather than go ahead with the planned transfer payment they're trying to eliminate the whole approach of gas tax

"ICBC" page 7

## 'Let them sell their cars,' says McGeer

Sacred cabinet minister Pat McGeer told B.C. motorists Friday that if they can't afford the new ICBC auto insurance rates they should sell their cars.

"I can say quite bluntly that if you can afford a car, you can afford insurance for it. If you can't afford insurance for it, sell it," he said.

McGeer, the minister responsible for the Insurance Corporation of B.C., made the remark after announcing premium increases of 100 to 200 per cent.

Interviewed on the CBC's Hourglass program by Sun columnist Jack Wasserman and Wendy O'Flaherty, McGeer said the rate increases are necessary to make the Crown corporation self-sufficient.

He warned that the rate hikes are the first of "a series of unpleasant shocks" for British Columbians due to government belt-tightening.

Asked by Wasserman if he would like to reconsider his remark that people who cannot afford the insurance should sell

their cars, he replied: "These are the facts of life."

"All I can tell you is that the insurance corporation has to break even this year. In order to do that it has to collect from the people. It insures the cost of insuring their vehicles... what essentially our decision

Typical rates, page 43

today said was that you have got to put into the insurance corporation as much as it costs to fix your bashed fenders."

He said he expects B.C. motorists to be "shocked" and "outraged" by the increases, but he said ICBC would be \$400 million in debt if the government had not acted.

"We can sympathize with them, but we just have to explain to people that this is a corporation that must stand on its own two feet like any company."

"And in order to do that it has to collect enough money to pay out the claims that come in during the year," he said.

McGeer said it is an "administrative impossibility" to allow drivers to pay this year's insurance premiums on an installment basis.

And he said that if the government were to underwrite bank loans for insurance fees, as the NDP government tried to do when ICBC was set up, then premiums would have to go even higher.

He said the government might have phased in the rate hikes over a period of time, but there is not enough money in the public coffers to delay any longer.

"There are alternatives (to the use of the automobile) and we can't unfortunately budget for every single British Columbian," he said.

Asked if the government intends to devote more money to public transport, he replied, "I would think transit would have higher priority than bashed fenders."

But he said gasoline tax revenues the NDP had planned to channel to ICBC will be used to build and maintain highways rather than to develop public transit.

The previous government had approved but not applied legislation enabling it to allocate up to 10 cents a gallon of the 17-cent-a-gallon gasoline tax toward ICBC operating costs.

In any case, McGeer said, taxpayers' money will not be used to subsidize ICBC. There are more important items in the provincial budget, he said.

"Do you realize that the losses in ICBC would be more than enough to run a university system (and would be) \$32 million more than payments in day care, Pharmacare and Mincome combined?"

"... (ICBC) has to be self-sufficient. That's what everybody has to grasp; that there's no such thing as a free lunch, there's no such thing as free car insurance."

He said the federal anti-inflation review board will not veto the increases because the provincial corporation does not fall under federal jurisdiction.

Furthermore, he said, the board cannot force any corporation to lose money.

## Peachland mayor out as election ruled invalid

Sun Staff Reporter

PEACHLAND — Mayor Harold Thwaite was judicially removed from office here Friday and the Nov. 15 municipal election was ruled invalid because of "almost total incompetence on the part of officials involved."

Following a four-day hearing, county court Judge A. D. C. Washington found the principles of the Municipal Act were "not only just bent a little or twisted, but in my judgment, completely fragmented."

He called for a new election.

During the hearing Judge Washington heard evidence of election irregularities, including irregular voter-registration procedures and a confused vote count.

Thwaite's challenger, Bernice Fletcher, who was declared winner on election night with 474 votes to 413 for Thwaite, sought to have the contest ruled void after a Nov. 20 recount, supported by a judicial recount, put incumbent Thwaite back into the mayor's chair.

"Everything went wrong," she told The

Vancouver Sun in an interview Friday. "So we got together a petition with 600 names which we sent to the attorney-general's and municipal affairs departments and to Premier Bill Bennett, our MLA."

Mrs. Fletcher claimed voters were told they must have lived in Peachland for six months prior to the election, while the Municipal Act says only that residence in B.C. for six months is the prerequisite for Canadian citizens.

She said she was told on election day that her scrutineers would not be allowed to observe the voting.

After the election, she added, unsealed ballot boxes were left in an unlocked room and spoiled and unused ballots were locked in a safe.

"Then he orders a recount and — bang! — there's a big reversal," she said. "So we made a petition to the court to have the election declared void."

Thwaite said he will run again despite Friday's ruling.

"The people of Peachland made their decision clear," he said. "I've been mayor for nine years and I'll run again and I'm going to win again."

Thwaite charged his opponent's campaign was unethical and her workers underhanded and said Mrs. Fletcher was inexperienced.

He denied the charges of election and vote-counting irregularities.

Ald. Harold Williamson is expected to act as mayor until after the election.

Among the murder methods were strangulation, stabbing, a shotgun blast and beating.

Seven men, seven women and a five-month-old baby were slain in England and Scotland.

## \$50 MILLION SOVIET BRIBE FOR ANGOLA AID ALLEGED

Sun News Dispatches

LONDON — The Soviet Union paid a \$50 million bribe to a West African leader to recognize the Communist-backed Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, British Liberal leader Jeremy Thorpe charged today.

Thorpe said his source was "a senior figure involved in the transaction" and "impeccable."

He said the bribe was paid in gold into a Swiss bank account, but he refused to name the recipient or his country.

Nineteen African states have recognized the MPLA regime as the government of Angola, where civil war continues between the MPLA and two other groups for control of the country.

In a major defense of its Angola policy, the Soviet Union today denied it was seeking military or economic gain and called for the end of foreign armed intervention there.

The vigorous defence was carried in Pravda, the official newspaper of the Communist party.

It was published in its entirety by the Soviet news agency Tass, reflecting the importance party leaders apparently have given it.

President Idi Amin of Uganda said Friday that next week's summit meeting of the Organization of African Unity concerning Angola will be decisive and urged Africans to bury their differences. The meeting opens Jan. 10 in Ethiopia. Amin is chairman of the OAU.

## Our oil baby aims to rock the cradle

By JOHN SAWATSKY  
Sun Ottawa Bureau

OTTAWA — Canada's newborn national oil company doesn't have an office yet but the boss wants it to grow up to be a giant.

"This is not a peanut game," he avers. "If I thought the government wasn't serious in establishing Petro-Canada, I wouldn't be here."

The boss is Maurice Strong and he made the point in his first major interview since assuming the company's top spot Jan. 1.

Ironically, for a man who seeks to mould his firm into a giant, Strong is the only employee, the company has no real office space, and only \$10 million in capital — next to nothing in the oil business.

But the company has Strong, and Strong has vision.

He told The Sun Thursday the company will go beyond Canadian borders to search for energy wherever it can be found.

While maintaining that exploration in Canada is the first priority, he stresses

that Petro-Can may drill in Venezuela or sign agreements for oil with foreign governments.

He refused to say where Petro-Can will drill because that is a matter up to the board of directors, which is expected to be announced early next week. But he did say the company, as a matter of policy, should be active outside Canada.

"No company ought to exist in the oil and gas field without having a very important international dimension," he said. "The oil and gas industry is a very international industry."

Two oil companies controlled by foreign governments have been operating in Canada for years and there is no reason why a Canadian Crown corporation shouldn't operate in other countries, he said. The two are British Petroleum and Elf, from France.

"So while this concept is new in Canada," he said, "Canada is not breaking new ground. In fact you could say Canada is a



MAURICE STRONG  
... not in peanut game

long way behind. Most countries that have to depend on foreign oil and gas had established government companies long before Canada has."

Technically Strong, 46, has no title but he is expected to be elected chairman and president by the board of directors at the first meeting expected later this month. He was chosen personally by Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau to head the company and his election is "recommended" by the government, which owns the company outright.

Strong flew to Calgary Friday to look for office space and mount an employee recruiting program from the industry there. The company will be headquartered in Calgary.

He dismissed speculation that the government has lost its enthusiasm in underwriting the heavy costs of launching an oil company and is confident there will be enough funds to give Petrocan a major

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WEATHER: Periods of rain Sunday. Low near freezing, high about 5.

B.C. is under the influence of a series of Pacific disturbances that will move inland over the southern part of the province. Details, page 3.

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