

Exhibition of archaeological finds in the People's Republic of China

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mitchell Sharp, recently announced that an agreement had been signed in Peking between Canada and the People's Republic of China under the terms of which the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, will hold an exhibition of archaeological finds in the People's Republic of China from August 7 to November 16.

During his visit to Peking in August 1972, Mr. Sharp conveyed the long-standing interest of the Canadian Government and people in hosting such an exhibition and obtained the agreement in principle of the Chinese Government. This exhibition has already been shown in Paris and London. It is now in Vienna, and will travel to Stockholm before coming to Canada.

The Chinese exhibition, which comprises close to 400 objects, is regarded as a unique event. Some of the most

important treasures ever unearthed from Chinese soil will be on view for the first time in the Western Hemisphere. All the artifacts to be displayed have been excavated during the past 25 years.

Under the terms of the agreement, the Chinese Committee for the Organization of Exhibitions of Archaeological Finds and the Chinese Exhibition Council of the Royal Ontario Museum are authorized to make the necessary arrangements. The Canadian Government will assume responsibility for the security of the exhibits and in the event of any loss or damage will indemnify the Chinese Government in accordance with the individual valuations of each exhibit. The Royal Ontario Museum will reimburse the Canadian Government for that part of the insurance premium which covers the period of the exhibition.

Proposed amendments to the Canada Pension Plan

Health and Welfare Minister Marc Lalonde introduced in Parliament on April 5 a Bill to amend the Canada Pension Plan. Its main purpose, stated Mr. Lalonde, was to establish equal treatment for male and female contributors and beneficiaries.

The effect of the Bill will be to provide a "survivors' pension" to widowers on the same basis as such benefits are now paid to widows. Widowers' pensions now are payable only when the husband is disabled and has been financially dependent on his wife. Full benefits are payable on application, however, to widows older than 45, and to widows under that age if they are disabled or have dependent children. Also, reduced benefits are payable to widows between 35 and 45 years of age. Under the new Bill, the latter provisions will apply to widow and widower alike.

Other equality provisions in the Bill Mr. Lalonde said, would enable children's benefits to be paid, on the disability or death of female contributors, on the same basis as they are now paid with respect to male contributors. At the present time, such benefits can be paid in the case of a female contributor only if it can be demonstrated

that the children were substantially dependent on their mother before her disability or death.

Pension tied to cost of living

Another primary object of the Bill is to provide for the implementation of those elements of the federal-provincial agreement reached in October 1973, which were not covered by the legislation passed by the last session of Parliament. Bill C-224 passed at the last session and effective on January 1 this year, provided for the escalation of Canada Pension Plan benefits in accordance with increases in the cost of living, and fixed the Year's Maximum Pensionable Earnings (YMPE) for 1974 and 1975. The YMPE is the maximum amount on which an individual can make contributions to the Canada Pension Plan in a given year. It also sets the maximum level of benefits under the Plan.

The new Bill establishes the formula for determining the YMPE beyond 1975. The YMPE will be increased by 12½ per cent each year until it catches up to the average earnings of Canadian workers as represented by the Industrial Composite of weekly wages and salaries published by Statistics Can-

ada. After this transitional period, the YMPE will be kept parallel with the average earnings by equating it with a projection of Industrial Composite data.

Earnings test removed

Another important change out of last October's agreement will be the removal of the earnings test now required under the Canada Pension Plan Act. Under the Act at present, persons aged 65 to 69 have their retirement pensions reduced or eliminated if they have earnings exceeding amounts stipulated by the legislation. Once the new Bill becomes law, however, this test will no longer apply, and persons 65 or older may draw their Canada Pension Plan retirement benefits whether or not they continue to work and receive wages.

Other changes

A further change related to last October's agreement will establish the basic exemption (the amount on which contributions do not have to be made) at 10 per cent of the Year's Maximum Pensionable Earnings; under the current legislation this is set at 12 per cent. At the same time, the Bill will delete a special provision that has applied to self-employed persons — the requirement that they must earn at least 1-1/3 of the Year's Basic Exemption to qualify as a contributor. These changes will provide greater opportunity for people at lower income levels to participate in the Canada Pension Plan. In particular, increased numbers of farmers, fishermen and other self-employed persons will be enabled to improve their protection under the Plan.

In addition, the new Bill includes provisions placed before Parliament in the last session, in Bill C-190, but not enacted before the end of the session. The most noteworthy part of that Bill was the provision allowing for the exemption of certain religious groups from the operation of the Canada Pension Plan. In addition, this Bill had included important changes for the payment of an individual's legal expenses when a case is appealed by the Minister to the Pension Appeals Board, and providing for retroactivity in the application of certain international agreements concluded by Canada with respect to the Canada Pension Plan. The first object