

dating by this method caused the destruction of the whole sample, smaller milligram-size carbon objects of scientific or other value were not subject to testing.

The new dating capability means that the carbon from groundwater in deep mines and wells can be tested to determine if certain sites can safely retain nuclear wastes. Only sites containing old groundwater (30,000 years or older) are considered safe for nuclear-waste storage purposes. Using the new technique, scientists can now identify these sites.

New social services funding

Health and Welfare Minister Monique Bégin has proposed a meeting with her provincial counterparts early in 1978 to discuss detailed arrangements for the federal-provincial sharing of social service costs.

Several provinces had requested more provincial flexibility and autonomy, and simpler administrative procedures than would have been possible under the proposed social services legislation, introduced in the House of Commons in June 1977. As a result, the Federal Government, in September, proposed a switch to block-funding from the cost-sharing approach. Under the block-funding proposal, federal contributions to the provinces for social services would be based on a formula that takes into account provincial population and economic growth rather than offering a percentage (approximately 50 per cent) of actual program costs. Health services have been made through block-funding since April 1, 1977.

Because of the need for fiscal restraint, Miss Bégin has advised the provincial ministers and territorial commissioners that \$132 million of the \$707 million originally proposed for 1978-79, can be made available only in 1979-80.

If the provinces agree, Ottawa intends to implement the block-funding arrangements by April 1, 1978 at a cost to the Federal Government of an estimated \$575 million during the first year.

The Federal Government now is contributing \$508 million under the welfare services provisions of the Canada Assistance Plan and the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons Act — both of which would be replaced by new social services legislation — to social services activities.

Independent unions surveyed

Independent local unions are reluctant to use the strike weapon, believe in co-operative rather than adversary employer-employee relations, and support the Anti-Inflation Board's mandatory wage guidelines.

Nevertheless, according to a report on a national survey, to be published in the December issue of *The Labour Gazette*, they do not see themselves as "company unions" accepting substandard wages and working conditions.

The survey, believed to be the first of independent unions in Canada, was undertaken by G.S. Rejan, an associate professor in the department of management at Concordia University in Montreal, and W. Grigoleitis, a graduate student in business administration.

From the results, the researchers maintain that the independents cannot be dismissed as "employer-dominated and weak", perhaps because they hold out to the employer the threat of affiliation with a bigger and more powerful organization.

"Inequitable treatment today would push these unions into the camp of the more aggressive and militant unions to the detriment of the company," the researchers say.

Hence they exist "in the trend-setting shadow of the large dominant labour organizations, and reap the fruit not because of their outstanding abilities or employers' benevolence, but because of a realistic appraisal of the employers' alternatives".

The independents have been losing ground — representing 2.7 per cent of the labour force in 1964 but only 1.4 per cent in 1975.

Other findings of the research are:

- Union dues are lower than those of affiliated unions, but the level of service may also be lower.
- About 75 per cent of their employers "welcomed" the establishment of the independent union and 14 per cent expressed "indifference".
- The unions hold an "idealistic" view of employer-employee relations and a departure "from the inevitable adversary position normally associated with the mainstream of organized labour".
- They view themselves "as achieving in a harmonious way what others have to extract in an adversary climate".

Himalayan school offers lessons in self-reliance, farm management

In the foothills of the Himalayas not far from Mount Everest there is a modern high school with 6,500 chickens on the roof. The students from poor Indian families learn mathematics not only in the classroom, but also by practising farm management.

The school's spirit is self-reliance and the driving force behind it is the principal, a Canadian Jesuit priest from Cape Breton who has spent 29 years in India, Father Murray Abraham.

The boys sell their farm products in the local village, Kurseong (near Darjeeling), and every rupee, every egg, every chicken is accounted for. Cows, pigs and goats are also raised at the school.

One year a vegetable garden was installed in raised beds on the playground. Produce was displayed with exhibits of other school projects at the annual exhibition, open to nearby villagers who benefit from the knowledge passed on by the boys.

Much of the equipment needed for the school projects is constructed in the school's carpentry and machine shops. The bamboo chicken coops were built there. But, more remarkable, the school itself was built by students. It replaces a leaky, ramshackle building that dated back to 1888.

Beginning in 1963, the boys took time from lessons each day to work at the excavation of the hillside and manufacture hollow bricks for the construction. In 1969 Father Abraham came to Canada to raise money for the \$570,000-project. The Canadian International Development Agency's Special Programs Branch provided \$100,000 in grants over four years.

Father Abraham's latest plan is to buy land from absentee landlords using funds from Canadian families that support the school, and then set up co-operative farms for the school's graduates.

Although he is grateful for the help he receives from Canadians, Father Abraham's emphasis on self-reliance has been the obvious key to surviving the difficulties of life in Darjeeling.

Ownership of life insurance by Canadians increased about 17 per cent in 1976 to a record \$257.2 billion, the Canadian Life Insurance Association reports.