

Scientific open house

La Semaine des sciences

Last October, NRC was invited to participate in Quebec's scientific open house — La Semaine des sciences. The Council was represented by its newly-established Industrial Materials Research Institute in Montreal, a laboratory which has already established links with Quebec's other research centres such as the university communities, the provincial research councils and institutions like the Centre de recherche industrielle du Québec (CRIQ) and the Institut de recherches d'Hydro-Québec (IREQ).

The first of its kind, this Science Week was a province-wide effort on the part of ten universities, 15 cégeps (Quebec's counterpart to grade 13), eight research centres and close to 50 scientific associations to create an awareness not only of the growing impact of science on everyday life but the importance of understanding its how-and-why. As well, the intention was to expose the public to the nature and diversity of the

province's scientific laboratories.

Setting up conferences, open houses, public debates, information booths, and film presentations on such a large scale, all to stimulate interest in scientific research, would have been unthinkable only 20 years ago. The yardstick of the enterprises' success can be measured by the size of the crowds at Place Laurier in Quebec City where people had to wait up to an hour to visit the booths of about 30 scientific clubs and associations.

For Quebecers seeking the unusual in science, there were no disappointments. At the labs of the Centre de recherches forestières des Laurentides, a division of Environment Canada in Quebec City, Italian red ants were awakened from their pre-winter torpor for the curious eyes of the touring groups. Researchers hope to someday use these ants against Canada's troublesome and tenacious spruce budworm. Also on demonstration were new tech-

niques to accelerate the growth rate of young plants for reforestation purposes. This was displayed in special "growth chambers" where light, heat, humidity and aseptic conditions were carefully controlled.

Laval University held conferences on topics ranging from earthquakes and entomology (insect studies) to meteorites and prehistoric tools. Nature excursions included a field trip, organized by the Ornithology Club, to Cap Tourmente to observe the hundreds of thousands of beautiful snow geese stopping over on their way South. This nature preserve just east of Quebec City pro-

In the main hall of the Complexe Desjardins in Montreal, many stopped to watch NRC's films on scoliosis, the Canada-France-Hawaii telescope, Gerhard Herzberg and Research Briefs. (Photo: Patricia Montreuil)

Au complexe Desjardins de Montréal, divers films du Conseil (la scoliose, en route pour le Mauna Kea, Herzberg et Coups d'oeil sur la recherche) attiraient de nombreux curieux. (Photo: Patricia Montreuil)

