Agreement-in-principle on native peoples' claim

Indian and Northern Affairs Minister Hugh Faulkner and President of the Committee for Original Peoples' Entitlement (COPE) Sam Raddi signed an agreement-in-principle on October 31 which establishes the basis for settlement of the COPE claim.

The agreement, the first to be reached by the Government with a native organization north of the 60th Parallel, is based on a joint position paper which was made public by the two groups July 14 (see *Canada Weekly*, dated August 23), and will provide the framework for the final agreement expected in about 12 months.

The agreement-in-principle seeks to achieve a balance of interests between the concerns of the Inuvialuit and national and territorial concerns for the development of energy and mineral resources in the Western Arctic region of the Northwest Territories.

The rights and benefits which the Inuvialuit will receive as a result of the settlement will include lands, financial compensation, wildlife harvesting rights, participation in land use and wildlife management, and economic and social development measures.

Computer career counselling

Employment Minister Bud Cullen announced recently that a career-counselling system which uses computers would begin extensive testing this year.

The system, successfully tested last winter in British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and New Brunswick, allows students or job-seekers to feed a computer terminal with information about their interests, aptitudes, education, future goals, salary and travel preferences. The computer, with its bank of more than 600 occupations, replies with a list of suitable careers – in English or French.

Florida chooses CHOICES

Several U.S. states and Canadian provinces have expressed interest in the method, which was developed by the federal employment department. Florida, which has completed a feasibility study, will do a pilot test in its high schools and employment service offices, using computer tapes and manuals supplied by Employment and Immigration Canada.

The state guarantees to maintain the name CHOICES, give public credit to the Canadian Government, and freely provide Canada with any improvements made to the system.

In July, the U.S. Department of Labour named CHOICES as the most appropriate major computerized guidance system in North America for use in state employment service offices.

CHOICES is expected to be used in manpower offices in up to 50 Canadian cities and towns by next spring. If it proves cost effective after a one-year study, CHOICES will operate in manpower offices across Canada.

Few drug residues in meat

The controversy over the possibility of antibiotic drug residues in Canadian meat should be laid to rest by the results of a recent test by Agriculture Canada.

Of almost 4,200 random samples of carcass meat collected without notice at slaughterhouses across Canada, only five were found to contain any residues – and the residues found amounted to only "traces", according to experts who carried out the study.

"The figure works out to about 0.12 per cent of the carcasses tested," says Dr. M.G. Morissette, Director General of the Meat Hygiene Directorate of Agriculture Canada's Health of Animals Branch.

The study, completed earlier this year, was carried out because of concern expressed by some consumers and consumers' representatives that people could be allergic to drugs remaining in meat at slaughter time, and also the chance that bacterial resistance to certain drugs could be built up.

The samples were collected – 2,954 from cattle and 1,220 from swine – and tested for presence of antibiotic residues at the federal department's animal pathology laboratories.

"Barely detectable traces of some microbial growth inhibitory substance were found in five muscle samples," Dr. Morissette says.

"It is unlikely that the trace amounts of inhibitory substances found in this survey would result in detectable levels in meat and meat products by the time it reaches the public and is consumed as food. Penicillin breaks down rapidly in the type of acid medium that develops as meat cools after slaughter."

But Dr. Morissette stresses that this fact "does not absolve us of the responsibility of taking steps to prevent any antibiotic residues in meat at the time of slaughter.

"Agriculture Canada will soon implement a system to investigate and eliminate even those few tissue samples containing such residues."

Domestic wine improves

Canadian wines are getting better all the time. Chris Pollard, a virologist at Agriculture Canada's Plant Quarantine Station at Sidney, British Columbia, says the Canadian wine industry, which has in the past relied on the hardy native North American labrusca grapes that produce a sweet wine, is now showing an interest in the European vinifera grapes.

But this presents problems for the industry. The French and Germans have spent centuries perfecting methods of cultivating the right vinifera varieties under very specific local conditions. For Canadian growers, deciding what varieties will grow best under their conditions is "like trying to squeeze 500 years of experience into ten years", Ms. Pollard suggests.

Growers who want to import vinifera plants from Europe must observe Agriculture Canada regulations, which demand that plant material either be from a country that has a virus-free certification system acceptable to Canada or that it be carefully screened for viruses at the Sidney station.

Some vinifera varieties – available from United States growers – meet Canadian certification standards. Another acceptable source in Germany cannot supply the Canadian demand.

Growers, then, must rely on the station to begin the time-consuming process of testing uncertified material for viruses and propagating virus-free plants for release to the industry.

In order to meet the demands of impatient growers scientists at the research station are now propagating plants in the laboratory using tissue culture, a system which could produce 100,000 plants in six months from one piece of plant tissue.

Bob Harris, head of the project, is propagating 15 varieties of vinifera and labrusca-type grapes. "The grape growers are showing a great deal of interest in the new technique," Dr. Harris says.