

## ARCHITECTS OF FEDERAL BUILDINGS HONOURED

Winners of national awards for excellence in the architecture of federal public buildings were announced recently by Public Works Minister Lucien Cardin. Firms from Vancouver and Toronto were selected for the first design awards made by Mr. Cardin.

Two of the four designs chosen were by the Vancouver firm of Thompson, Berwick and Pratt. The other firms chosen are Gardiner, Thornton, Gathe and Associates of Vancouver for their design of the St. Mary's Indian Residential school of Mission City, British Columbia, and Short & Moffat and Partners of Toronto for their design of the Sir Alexander Campbell Post Office Department headquarters at Ottawa.

The two designs by Thompson, Berwick and Pratt are the Fisheries Research Board's technological station and the Agriculture Department's science service laboratory, both on the University of British Columbia campus at Vancouver.

### AIM OF AWARDS

The design awards programme was conceived and initiated by Mr. Cardin's predecessor, Mr. Jean-Paul Deschatelets. It is intended to recognize outstanding examples of Federal Government architecture executed for the Department by registered Canadian architects. It also aims at promoting public interest in the design of federal buildings.

The programme is the second measure introduced this year by the Works Department to promote public interest and encourage excellence in public architecture. In February, it was decided to devote a percentage of building costs to incorporating fine art work into the design of new federal structures.

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## SYMPOSIUM ON FOOD POISONING

Toxic factors in foods, poisons that can harm humans if not carefully controlled in the processing or preparation of foodstuffs, were reviewed and discussed during a two-day symposium held recently in Ottawa. The symposium, sponsored by the Food and Drug Directorate of the Department of National Health and Welfare, was attended by governmental delegates from the United States, Britain and Canada, as well as representatives of the commercial food processors and the universities.

### SUBJECTS OF DISCUSSION

Discussion ranged from naturally-occurring toxic factors in plants and the use of food additives and pesticides to levels of radioactivity in foods.

Dr. F.M. Strong of the University of Wisconsin reviewed the occurrence of toxic substances found naturally in various foods. He discussed a compound known as *beta-amino-propionitrile* (BAPN), a toxic factor found in the flowering sweet-pea. When fed to growing rats or chicks, BAPN produces skeletal defects, hernias and aortic ruptures. Dr. Strong emphasized, however, that there was no evidence

that BAPN or other compounds capable of producing similar damage to the connective tissues of the body occurred in human foods. Dr. Strong also noted that severe hypertensive crises might occur in human patients receiving tranquilizers after eating aged cheese. Apparently, tranquilizers reduce the ability of patients to "detoxify" substances known as *pressor amines*, which are found in several varieties of aged cheese. Cycad plants, which are widely used in tropical and subtropical areas as sources of starch, contain highly toxic substances normally removed by soaking the seeds in water before use.

### EFFECTS OF FALLOUT

Dr. P.M. Bird, Chief of the Radiation Protection Division, Department of National Health and Welfare, discussed the public-health aspects of radioactive fallout from nuclear-weapons tests. He stressed that there was no evidence that present levels of radioactivity in foods constituted a hazard to human health. He said that Canadian results in this field appeared comparable to those obtained in the United States and Britain. Dr. Bird mentioned that a unique food-chain cycle found in the Canadian North was resulting in significantly higher levels of radioactive cesium in caribou than in beef. This particular aspect is being studied further.

Dr. F.S. Thatcher, Chief of the Microbiology Division of the Food and Drug Directorate, pointed out that a main cause of food poisoning was toxins produced by bacteria. Food poisoning from eating foods contaminated with *staphylococcus* bacteria had probably been experienced in some form by nearly every family, he said.

Dr. B.L. Oser, President of Food and Drug Research Laboratories Incorporated, New York, discussed problems related to the use of food additives. He pointed out the complicated nature of food laws and made a special plea for informative labeling on foods, to inform consumers properly of the composition of food products.

### EFFECTS OF PESTICIDES

Dr. O. Garth Fitzhugh of the United States Food and Drug Administration presented evidence that the presence in the human diet of small amounts of a variety of pesticides and other chemicals used in food production or processing was not a health hazard. He stressed the necessity for adequate testing of pesticides and pointed out some of the difficulties in extrapolating animal data to humans.

Dr. R.A. Chapman, Director of the Canadian Food and Drug Directorate, traced the development of food laws in Canada from the relatively primitive controls over elementary aspects of food sanitation and adulteration that existed 90 years ago to present legislation giving broad protection against a wide variety of hazards, including those resulting from modern food-production and processing techniques. He pointed out that, during the previous 10 to 15 years, there had been marked increases in the use of chemicals in food production and processing. This had necessitated new regulations under the Food and Drugs Act to protect consumers against health hazards and fraud.