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## Biochemists to meet in Toronto

Toronto will host the eleventh International Congress of Biochemistry from July 8 to 13, when 58 symposia covering 13 major subjects will be presented by some 232 invited speakers. Biochemistry involves the study of hormones, DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid), mechanisms of disease and disease prevention, as well as interactions between cells and malignancy.

The conference will open with a plenary session featuring Dr. Arthur Kornberg, of Stanford University, California, who demonstrated the mechanism of DNA replication. He will share the podium with Philip Handler of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences.

In addition to the scientific sessions, many satellite meetings relating to the main program are being organized and a full range of industrial and laboratory tours are planned.

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## Fewer and fewer smokers

At the opening of the National Education Week on Smoking early this year, Health and Welfare Minister Monique Bégin announced the conclusion of the latest report on tobacco use in Canada in 1977.

According to the report, the majority of Canadians do not smoke and the number of smokers is decreasing. In 1965, 50.2 per cent of Canadians over the age of 15 years did not smoke and this proportion rose to 55.3 per cent by 1974.

In 1977, 13.3 per cent of Canadians over 15 were former smokers.

The same survey also shows that 6.3 million Canadians smoked cigarettes every day in 1977, a figure representing 35.9 per cent of the adult population.

Statistics show that regular use of tobacco is continuing to decrease among men 20 years of age and over. In 1977, 43 per cent of this group smoked regularly, compared to 57.9 per cent in 1965.

There was a decrease of 2.6 per cent in the number of men who smoked cigarettes between 1975 and 1977, the most significant drops being observed in the 20-to-24 and 45-to-64 age groups.

The percentage of women who are steady smokers has remained stable in the past 13 years, and is about 32 or 33 per cent of the female adult population.

The use of tobacco is continuing to diminish among young people from 15 to 19 years of age. It was 30.5 per cent in 1970, 28.5 per cent in 1975 and 26.8 per cent in the last survey. A considerable decrease in the percentage of boys who smoke regularly accounts for the decline.

In 1977, 26.9 per cent of teenage boys and 26.7 per cent of teenage girls stated in the survey that they smoked every day.

According to the report there is considerable variation in the regional distribution of steady smokers; Quebec still has the highest percentage of smokers 15 years of age and over.

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## Income and wealth

Mean wealth of all family units was \$46,273 while their average income was \$15,849 in 1976, according to the latest in a series of data on assets and debts of Canadian households collected as a supplement to the Survey of Consumer Finances conducted by Statistics Canada in May 1977. Both the distribution of wealth and mean wealth varied considerably according to family income group: for instance, family units with incomes under \$3,000 had a mean wealth of \$16,657, with 30 per cent of these holding wealth of less than \$1,000, while family units with incomes of \$35,000 and over had a mean wealth of \$205,859, with 31.1 per cent of these reporting wealth of \$150,000 and over.

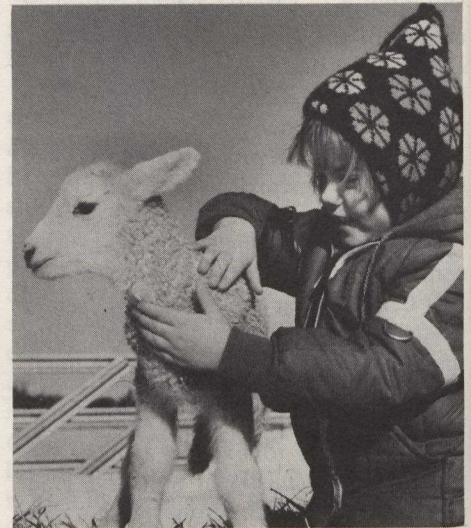
The composition of wealth at the national level indicates that the value of owner-occupied homes accounted for 47.9 per cent of total asset holdings, followed by 19.3 per cent of assets held in the form of equity in business/professional interests. Only one-fifth of total asset holdings consisted of liquid and other financial assets. The composition of wealth again varied with the size of family income.

Mortgage debt on the home was the biggest financial liability; when expressed as a percentage proportion of total asset holdings, it amounted to 10.8 per cent at the national level, compared to a maximum value of 18.9 per cent for families in the \$20,000-\$24,999 income group.

Some 59.6 per cent of all family units owned their homes and the average market value of an owner-occupied home was estimated at \$43,843. Again, 54 per cent of all home owners had mortgaged their homes for an average of \$18,285.

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## Spring is in the air



*Enough of this kid stuff, where's my mother and the rest of the lamb gang?*

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## Change in theft law proposed

An appeal by the Law Reform Commission of Canada to simplify the law of theft and fraud and to reconcile the relevant sections of the Criminal Code with current case law, recommends changing the form of the law without altering its substance.

Thirty lengthy sections of the Criminal Code would be reduced to 14 brief ones. Only six offences of dishonest acquisitions would remain: theft, dishonest taking, robbery, blackmail, fraud and dishonest obtaining.

One current section of the Code provides that spouses cannot steal each other's property except in special circumstances. A report by the Commission, entitled *Theft and Fraud*, suggests that "special distinctions between marital and other close relationships are unnecessary" and "that such cases can adequately be dealt with by reference to the general principle of honesty".

The proposed section on extortion is narrower than its counterpart in the current Code. It would replace "extortion" with the more popular term "blackmail" and limit its application to "an invasion of economic interests". The law now covers extortion of consent to sexual intercourse, which the Commission believes has no place in an area dealing with "dishonest acquisition of property".