

WORKING CONDITIONS: Working conditions in the slaughtering and meat packing industry were found to be equal or better than the average for manufacturing as a whole at April 1956, according to information released by Hon. Milton F. Gregg, Minister of Labour.

The study, which was conducted by the Labour Department's Economics and Research Branch, covered 80 establishments and 17,985 plant employees. The study showed that four-fifths of the plant employees were on a 5-day 40-hour week; two weeks' vacation after 5 years and three weeks after 15 years were predominant; almost 95 per cent of the employees enjoyed 8 or more statutory holidays per year; approximately 75 per cent were covered by pension plans; and about 95 per cent were covered by group life insurance.

In all provinces except Quebec and Ontario plant workers comprising more than 90 per cent of the provincial total were in packing plants reporting a 40-hour week. In Quebec about 11 per cent of the workers were on a 45-hour week, and in Ontario more than a fifth of the workers were in plants where 45 hours was standard.

The practice of granting rest periods was universally reported throughout the meat packing industry. The commonest practice in all regions was two 10-minute periods per day, although 31 per cent of the employees in Alberta and 10 per cent in British Columbia were in plants reporting two 15-minute periods.

Employees in plants reporting pension plans ranged from 59 per cent of the total coverage in Quebec and Saskatchewan to 91 per cent in the Maritimes. In the Maritime region almost half of the packing house employees were in establishments where the entire cost of the pension plan was borne by the employer. In the other regions a 50-50 arrangement was more common, although the proportion in plants paying the entire cost was substantial in several provinces.

Group life insurance plans were prevalent in all regions, ranging between 91 and 100 per cent of the employees. The cost-sharing arrangement for group life showed considerable variation between regions.

TOBACCO CROP: Production of leaf tobacco (green weight) in the crop year ending September 30, 1956 amounted to 170,278,000 pounds, more than 26 per cent larger than the preceding year's 134,840,000 pounds, the Dominion Bureau of Statistics reports. Growers received \$76,012,000 for the 1956 crop, some 31 per cent more than 1955's \$57,685,000. Producers in Ontario grossed \$72,604,000 compared to \$53,531,000 in 1955. Harvested area in 1956 was larger at 127,722 acres as compared with 109,909 in the preceding year and the average yield rose to 1,333 pounds from 1,227. Ontario's acreage in 1956 was 116,356 versus 96,833 in 1955.

MOBILE INSPECTION: Services provided the fishing industry in the Atlantic Provinces by the federal Department of Fisheries have been considerably enhanced by a new mobile fish inspection laboratory which was placed in operation in March.

The unit, a large truck-trailer assembly, is designed to provide a rapid, on-the-spot means of investigation where any unusual technological problems in fresh fish processing or in shellfish packing are encountered.

The mobile laboratory, which is operated by the Department's Inspection and Consumer Branch, supplements the services provided by the fish inspection laboratories at Halifax, Shediac, St. Andrews and Charlottetown, and two small mobile laboratories.

The mobile laboratory is based in Halifax and will serve the entire Maritimes area. Its outstanding feature is that it will be able to provide a highly technical service to outlying areas in a matter of hours.

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DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS: The Department of External Affairs has announced that an agreement has been reached between Canada and Tunisia to establish diplomatic relations between the two countries. As a first step towards the development of closer relations between Canada and Tunisia the present Tunisian Ambassador in Washington, M. Mongi Slim, will become concurrently the first Ambassador of Tunisia to Canada. Ambassador Slim will continue to reside in Washington.

Tunisia, a former French protectorate, achieved full independence on March 20, 1956. Canada extended de jure recognition to the new state on June 20, 1956. Canada was represented by a special envoy at the celebration of Tunisia's first anniversary of its independence.

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OVERSEAS AWARDS: As announced by the Royal Society of Canada, twelve fellowships worth \$4,000 each and sixteen scholarships each worth \$2,000 have been awarded in the sixth series of Canadian Government Overseas Awards.

These awards are tenable in the United Kingdom, France, Italy and The Netherlands. Of the twenty-eight winners in this year's competition, seven will go to England, three to Italy, one to The Netherlands, and seventeen to France.

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RATES LOW: Canadians have one of the lowest electricity rates per kilowatt hour in the world, the Dominion Bureau of Statistics reports. In the United States the average revenue per kilowatt hour sold to residential or domestic customers averaged 2.64 cents in 1955 against 1.66 cents per kilowatt hour in Canada. Commercial and industrial sales in the United States averaged 1.3 cents per kilowatt hour compared with 0.7 cents for Canada.