

### 5.3.3 Worker compensation

Federal involvement in worker compensation is limited to areas of direct federal interest which cannot be covered by provincial legislation. The Government Employees Compensation Act covers employees of the public service of Canada and several Crown corporations. The federal penitentiary inmates compensation scheme covers inmates injured during work-related activities. The Merchant Seamen Compensation Act covers seafarers not covered by provincial acts.

Compensation is generally provided to federal government employees for personal injuries sustained during the course of their employment. Compensation is also payable for industrial diseases arising from work.

Claims are largely administered on behalf of the federal government by the provincial worker compensation boards. Benefits are identical to rates set by individual provinces.

Various types of benefits are provided for a worker protected by compensation legislation. Benefits for disability are based on a percentage of average weekly earnings. Persons with a permanent or temporary total disability, presumed not to be able to work at all, receive 75% of gross average weekly earnings (90% of net earnings in Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan and Alberta) as long as the disability lasts. Partial disablement entitles a worker to proportionate compensation. Medical, hospital and rehabilitation benefits are also provided.

A primary objective of compensation is rehabilitation of the injured worker. Boards may adopt any means considered expedient to help get workers back to work and to lessen any handicap. In British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland, the boards may also provide counselling and vocational assistance to the dependent spouse of a deceased worker in order to help that person find employment or become self-sufficient.

Except in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Northwest and Yukon Territories, where monthly payments are fixed by law, benefits to dependents, in fatal cases, are calculated according to the worker's earnings.

## 5.4 Organized labour

### 5.4.1 Union membership

As of January 1988, union membership in Canada totalled 3,841,000, an increase of 1.6% from 3,782,000 recorded a year earlier. Union membership represented 36.6% of Canada's non-

agricultural paid labour force in 1988, down from 37.6% in 1987. Union membership as a percentage of the non-agricultural paid labour force has declined continuously since its peak of 40.0% in 1983. This reflects the fact that while the number of union members has increased over the past five years, the number of non-agricultural paid workers has grown more rapidly.

The three major public service unions retained their top ranking in terms of membership, although membership declined in the Public Service Alliance of Canada from 179,900 in 1987 to 175,700 in 1988. The other two public service unions increased their memberships — the Canadian Union of Public Employees from 330,000 in 1987 to 342,000 in 1988, and the National Union of Provincial Government Employees from 278,500 in 1987 to 292,300 in 1988. Membership in the other seven largest unions remained the same or increased over the year.

During the period 1980 to 1988, the number of national unions increased from 128 to 222, and membership from 1.7 million to 2.4 million. At the same time, international unions decreased from 80 to 65, and their membership from 1.6 million to 1.3 million.

In 1988, CLC's affiliated membership amounted to 2,231,697, an increase of 19,000 from the 1987 total of 2,212,942.

### 5.4.2 Collective agreements

Labour Canada publishes quarterly base rate settlement data for collective agreements. The agreements covered are limited to negotiating units of 500 or more employees in all industries except construction. The base rate for a negotiating unit is defined as the lowest rate of pay, expressed in hourly terms, for the lowest-paid classification used for qualified workers in the bargaining unit. The wage data are not necessarily representative of the average increases received by the workers in the whole negotiating unit. Nevertheless, the data are aggregated using the total number of employees in the negotiating unit.

Major collective agreements settled in the second quarter of 1988 provided base rate increases averaging 4.5%. The 4.5% increase was the largest since the third quarter of 1983 when increases averaged 6.0%. The second quarter figure largely reflected the impact of a 6.1% average increase to 92,100 construction industry employees, all but 3,050 in Ontario. Settlements covering 213,000 workers in all other industries averaged 3.9%, a figure consistent with quarterly averages of approximately 4% since the first quarter of 1987.