

DAL'S REACTOR SAFE..SO FAR

by Terry Weatherbee

Nuclear reactors seem to be popping up as profusely as crabgrass (and the ecologically minded are finding them just as hard to get rid of). It may surprise some to know that there is a nuclear reactor right here on Dalhousie campus.

It is a completely Canadian designed reactor designated SLOWPOKE (an acronym for SAFE LOW POWER CRITICAL EXPERIMENT). It is basically a research reactor under the directorship of Dr. D.E. Ryan; and lies underground in the basement of the Life Science Building.

But fear not. The Dal SLOWPOKE II belongs to the safest class of reactors in the world. Because of the size and type of reactor there is no need whatsoever for worries of

harmful radiations.

The reactor itself is surprisingly compact and small as compared to the regular breeder type. In contrast to the massive breeder the SLOWPOKE II has a core which is only; 22 cm in diameter, 22cm in height, and only 83600 cm³ in volume. The breeders on the other side have reactor cores as large as two or three classrooms.

The SLOWPOKE only produces a maximum 20 kilowatts of power which is equivalent to two kitchen stoves. Because it produces very little power and very little heat there is no need for the massive amounts of shielding found in the power reactors.

Also, the size of the reactor does not emit gross amounts of radiation. In fact the radiation level of a watch with

a 'glow in the dark dial' gives off more radiation than the reactor itself, with the exception of the core material.

However the core elements are shielded and protected in such a manner that only the proper authorities can ever gain access, and only under the most stringent of conditions.

The major use of the SLOWPOKE II is to subject various sample materials to low level neutron emissions. This neutron bombardment causes the sample to become irradiated (radioactive). By studying these samples and carefully observing their radioactive emissions scientists can learn of exact amounts of trace elements within a given sample.

This is a great boon to the

medical world. With this facility it becomes possible for doctors to diagnose many diseases much more efficiently. One example is multiple sclerosis. This disease is a difficult one to detect but with the aid of the trace research done by reactors such as SLOWPOKE II it becomes far easier.

Even the ecologists may benefit through the use of this reactor. (Believe it or not) With the SLOWPOKE II researchers can study trace elements in soil and water samples. Studies on things such as acid rain or mercuric poisoning become more simple and exact.

It is nice to note that whereas there has been an ever increasing number of accidents in nuclear facilities

and laboratories across the continent there has yet to be one at Dalhousie, in three years of operation. To date there has yet to be any measureable amount of radiation on any of the personal dosimeters.

The only danger from this type of reactor says ecologist Susan Holtz is "that the increased traffic and handling of isotope materials by more and more people" could lead to a laxing of the rules of procedure.

The SLOWPOKE II is as failsafe as man can make it and is a very valuable instrument and tool for the advancement of many of the sciences. Let up hope that the spotless record of our nuclear facility at Dal remains stainless; after all it only takes a spoonful.

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Mc Donald's

while riding Cunningham, trying to paint him as a sloppy worker to the crew. Managers began escorting them to the door when their shifts were over to keep them from talking to other employees.

One day in February, Sorriano arrived at work to see a memo marked "To the managers only" lying in full view on a desk in the crew room. "It has come to our attention," the memo said, "that Mike Sorriano is being paid by the union." Sorriano demanded that the paper be posted, and did his best to squelch the rumour.

For spotting potential rebels and determining the depth of union sympathy, the McDonald's corporation has devised the rap session, at which employees are allowed to air their gripes and offer suggestions. It was designed to show

that managers really cared about their crews, but, according to Boas and Chain, in effect it is little more than 'a sophisticated interrogation technique'.

On January 29, five days after local 593 asked for recognition, a rap session was held at the Wabash outlet with two guests from Hamburger Central, executives Jim Morgan and James Smith. First, the two handed out questionnaires, asking crew members what they liked and disliked about the Wabash operation, requiring no signatures with the answers, Morgan then spoke at some length, saying there were 4,400 McDonald's, that none of them was unionized, and that, further, no one could tell McDonald's what to do. According to Sorriano, who took notes during the speech,

Morgan also played on the fears of the women employees, some of them mothers, by explaining that union dues were like a garnishment, that they come out of the pay cheque even if there were hungry babies at home who had no milk.

Charges laid

On February 2, the union filed an unfair labour practice charge against Lyon Weber, charging the company with surveillance, threats of reprisals, and attempting to buy off employees involved in union activities with benefits. The company signed a settlement agreement on March 29, by which they admitted no guilt but agreed to post a notice for 60 days saying that they would not interrogate or question employees regarding their union membership, prevent the distribution of union

literature, create the impression that the organizers were under surveillance or being watched, or try to buy off anyone with promises of extra benefits.

However, that decision was the last union victory. When the union and the company February to settle the union's demand for an election, the hotel workers argued that they had enough signatures from the Wabash employees to qualify for an election; the company argued that the appropriate bargaining unit was not the single outlet on Wabash, but all 11 in the Lyon Weber chain, and that therefore the union did not have enough signatures. All the decisions were made in the Rolling Meadows headquarters, Lyon and his attorney contended, claiming individual managers had no discretion in the day-to-day operations of the restaurants because the manuals the company provided set forth precise procedures. The union countered the company's claims by

putting employees on the witness stand who testified that the store managers operated with considerable autonomy, contradicting claims of exactly where some decisions were made, particularly those of hiring and firing.

On April 12, the NLRB's regional director announced he sided with Lyon Weber. The decision was hardly unprecedented, as management firms in Hawaii, Brooklyn, and probably several other places have beaten union challenges using the same argument of centralized management and similar working conditions. "The regional director," union lawyers argued in their appeal, "confuses product uniformity, for which all McDonald's strive, with a common and interchangeable bargaining unit. This decision, if permitted to stand, would be a clear signal to the fast food franchise industry that the simple way to avoid collective bargaining is to write manuals of multi-store procedures,

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