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Live Better Ecologically

Diane Rene

The average Canadian's attitude towards energy for many years was that our resources were "cheap and plentiful," a way of thinking still reflected in our energy movement. So stated guest speaker Norm Rubin, during a Vanier lecture last Wednesday October 31. Rubin is a nuclear power researcher for Energy Probe, a group devoted to finding new ways of energy conservation and to discouraging the use of nuclear power.

"At the moment," said Rubin, "Energy Probe is working on the cancellation of the Darlington Nuclear Reactor Station." He further explained that his organization is making headway in this matter; Parliament has already proposed to halt the building of Darlington for four to six years. As for Bruce and Pickering nuclear plants, their progress is too far advanced to halt, but Energy Probe still aims to improve safety systems at both.

Rubin argued that government and industry have encouraged high consumption rates. "Not long ago, we were being told to 'live better electrically' and to buy bigger inefficient automobiles. Few people were concerned about inefficiency, and before the oil embargo of 1973 conservation was almost completely ignored in most Canadian energy plans."

Between 1974 and 1975, growth in energy consumption dropped drastically to .6 percent from the 1972 figure of 6.3 percent because of higher prices, an economic recession, and conservation measures. However, Canada still uses more energy per person than any other country. As Rubin explained, "A Canadian uses about twice as much energy as a person in West Germany, or Britain, 3 times as much as a person in Japan, and 1½ times as much as a person in Sweden."

Strangely enough, one would think that the Canadian cost of living would have to be higher,

according to our energy consumption figures. However, in 1978, Canada's per capita income was about the same as that in Sweden.

How can we decrease our oil consumption without having to restructure our lives? "Decrease our dependence on it," declared Rubin. "Sweden manages without difficulty to get 50 percent more economic output per oil equivalent," he said. "They squeeze each oil barrel before it goes up in smoke."

Measures other than nuclear power must be taken to alleviate our energy problem. For example, several economic measures as well as ecological ones, would change the situation. One such economic measure would be marginal cost pricing — the pricing of energy to account for the increasing costs of new sources. This would encourage conservation. As well, incentives to promote greater energy efficiency through tax credits, sales tax reductions and research and development should be introduced. Low interest loans should be made available for energy conservation, which would lead to increasing efficiency of energy use.

As for ecological measures, according to Rubin, solar energy is becoming more and more popular, and has been proven economical and viable. This method produces no harmful side effects and efficiently heats a home throughout any season.

Other measures mentioned in the speech would include limiting the amount of heat exhausted through chimney stacks and ventilation systems, necessitating increased usage of heat recuperators and heat exchangers. Lighting levels in commercial and industrial space should be reassessed and in most cases, lowered. As well, car use in urban areas should be discouraged, with a corresponding improvement in public transit.

**Crack a pack of Colts
along with the beer.**

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