

"Light Work" Ravages Down and Outers

BUFFALO, NY (CUP-LNS) - For Buffalo's unemployed workers, the temptation proved too much to pass up. College students, moonlighters and down and outers alike, reponded to an offer on half a days pay for a few minutes of "light work".

An official of the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) described the work as "the dirty end of the nuclear business."

It's the job of repairing nuclear leaks, disposing of nuclear wastes and "cleaning contaminated areas" in the nation's more than 100 nuclear power plants.

To supply the labour, nuclear plants reply on local labour contractors - they don't want their full time employees to be "overexposed".

In Buffalo the nuclear power plant operated by the Nuclear Fuel Service Inc. (NFS) has suffered breakdowns and nuclear leakage from the time the plant started operation in the mid-1960's.

A battalion of continually changing "supplemental workers" averaging 1,400 people a year, were recruited to clean up the Buffalo plant. The AEC finally ordered the plant closed down in 1972, but the process of decontaminating the plant still goes on.

According to an article by Robert Gillette in Science Magazine, after the temporary workers at NFS received an "apparent minimal instruction in safety procedures and potential hazards of their jobs, the men were put to work." Sometimes the work would last a week, more often a matter of minutes.

In AEC terminology the workers would "burn out", i.e., have received the maximum amount of radioactive exposure that the AEC considers safe. The workers would then be paid a minimum of half a day's pay (at \$3.00 an hour) and be replaced by what one full time NFS employee called "fresh bodies."

An AEC study showed the workers an average radiation dose considered legal by AEC standards but four times the amount considered safe for the general public and ten times the exposure full time AEC employees supposedly receive during an entire year.

According to a local union official, the two contractors for the NFS in Buffalo, Manpower Inc. and Bentz Construction Company, recruited one third of the workers from Buffalo's skid row.

Many of these workers

were in no condition to understand what they were being asked to do. And dozens of the former temporary employees say they were told "virtually nothing" about the hazards of the job.

One former laboratory supervisor at the Buffalo plant described the scene of temporary workers waiting to go on the job. "You'd see all these people sitting around the lunchroom, and you felt that a lot of them shouldn't even be in the plant. Some of them were really afraid, and they'd ask a lot of questions. I just tried to talk them into going home, but they wanted the money."

Said another former NFS worker, "The prevalent feeling (among fulltime workers) was that these people were nuts for going in there and doing what they did."

The Buffalo plant, which has hired over 7,000 temporary workers since 1966, is not the only nuclear power plant to do so. A nuclear power plant operated by Dow Chemical Company outside of Denver, Colorado, used crews of college students to decontaminate a plutonium fabrication shop that burned down in 1969. A Commonwealth Edison plant in New York has used up to 100 welders to repair leaks.

Western Education Students Form Union

SASKATOON (CUP) --- Education students in Western Canada have decided to form their own union.

The idea for the Union grew out of a conference held in Winnipeg last April with education students and professional teachers.

In Winnipeg the students realized they had many common concerns that were not being dealt with and decided to hold a conference in Calgary in October to discuss what could be done.

At the Calgary conference in October motions were passed calling for the Education Students' Union to act as a liaison between post secondary schools offering programs in education.

The President or designate of each school's education student's organization was named to a board for the Western students' union and it was decided to approach all of the education student groups in the west to decide objectives for the union.

The University of Saskatchewan Education Students Union will be acting as coordinator of reports and information between the members.

The areas of concern for this Western Education Union are primarily academic. Students wish to have the education programs standardized between institutions to allow easier transferring of credits.

The students also wish to gain credit for practice teaching (student teaching for short periods throughout the year) just as they have from intern teaching (a three month student teaching period).

The nine members of the Western Education Students' Union represent roughly 10,000 students. The Union however has financial problems. Since education colleges in Western Canada have different financial states, membership fees will be difficult to determine.

Don Horncastle, President of the University of Saskatchewan's Education Students Union feels that this new western union will accomplish more for education students than the National Union of Students (NUS).

He feels that NUS is doing nothing for individual colleges and that NUS's priorities for dealing with student loans are misdirected. For example, in Saskatchewan, only 6,000 out of 15,000 post secondary students get student loans.

Bob Buckingham of the National Union of Students said in Ottawa that NUS welcomed the formation of student groups like the Western Education Students' Union. He said it had always been a policy of NUS that "students with common concerns should get together at

all levels."

Buckingham admitted that NUS did not have the resources to handle all the problems of specific faculties, but felt that groups like the education students could become effective in dealing with problems of education students.

He defended NUS's policies regarding student loans (student aid) saying that this program had been worked out by the member student councils as a priority over the organization's two year existence.

Fact & Fiction

CHARLOTTETOWN (CUP) - More than 400 students elected three fictitious candidates to lead a non-existent committee at the University of Prince Edward Island.

A slate of eight fictitious characters running for a "committee on student-faculty evaluations" was put forward by a group of students to dramatize student apathy on campus.

About 28 per cent of the 1,450 students cast votes, more than double the turnout for a real election for the university senate two weeks ago.



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