

Scientist claims findings misinterpreted

Group protests plant

by James Young
Canadian University Press

A local nutrition group organizing against the construction of the world's largest food irradiation plant in suburban Richmond is calling on the federal government to ban the process from Canada.

"I am being deprived of my right to buy fresh health food which the body thrives on," said Lila Parker, a volunteer of the Health Action Network Society. "And Canadians have a genuine legal right to health protection from the federal government."

Parker was one of 200 people who protested Aug. 13 against QIX Facilities' proposed \$38.7 million plant.

"We had a table painted with a nuclear symbol and place settings for six," said Parker. People supposedly ate 'nuke food', "then dropped dead and were hauled away on a stretcher," she said.

The group's concern is a process which uses radioactive isotopes from cobalt-60 or electromagnetic beams to either kill bacteria, insect eggs, and larvae, or to prolong shelf life of certain foods. Parker said the process causes serious health problems, with laboratory animals developing massive heart attacks, severe hemorrhaging, and testicular and breast cancer after eating irradiated food.

Parker also said an Indian study found 10 children who ate irradiated wheat showed a higher incidence of polyploidy — or non-dividing — cells, a condition similar to leukemia.

But John Vanderstoep, a University of British Columbia food science professor, disagrees with Parker's

interpretation of research findings.

"These concerns are blown out of proportion from what could be reasonably interpreted from the data," said Vanderstoep. In the Indian study, for example, Vanderstoep said the control group also showed a higher incidence of polyploidy, indicating the condition was caused by another, unknown factor.

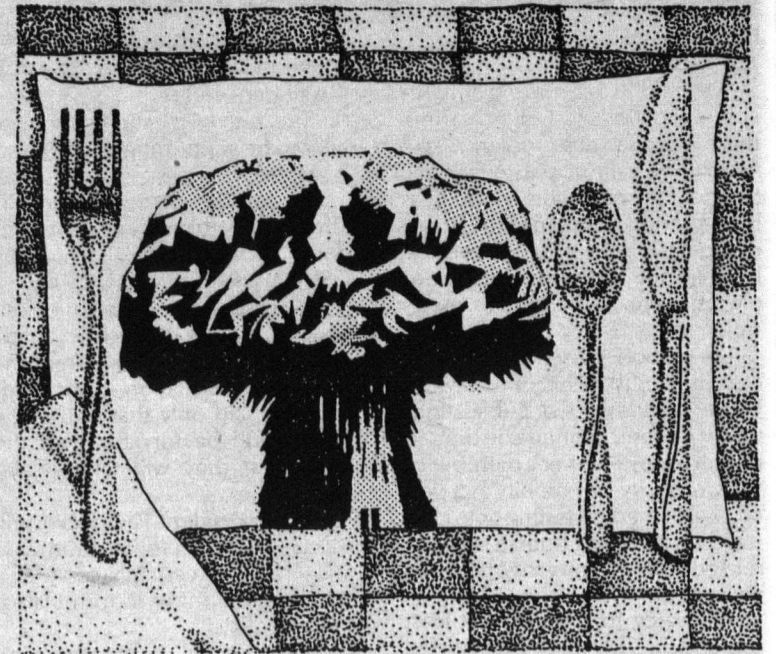
"International experts, such as those at the World Health Organization, have evaluated all the data and they say it is safe for use under certain specific conditions, usually under one kilogray of radiation," Vanderstoep said.

Health activists are also concerned irradiated foods will not be identified, a decision currently before the federal cabinet. Even if

labelling is required, Parker said irradiated food will be identified by "a cute little flower symbol and the word 'radura', which means nothing to an uninformed public."

She said other problems with the process are the use of portable irradiators in fields and on fish boats, and a lack of restrictions against how often food may be irradiated.

Parker said the Richmond plant, with the capacity to irradiate more than 225,000 kilograms of food per day, would be the world's largest. The Richmond project has no scheduled completion date because of financial problems, but Parker said two other plants at Laval and Ste. Hyacinth in Quebec are scheduled to open in March 1987.



Council: students paramount

by Shauna MacDonald

Council feels it should deal with students' problems first, and if there is time, address other issues.

Two motions to protest against apartheid and human rights violations in countries listed in the Amnesty International '85 Yearbook, were defeated by council last month.

Michael Hunter, VP External, is the force behind the international issues debate. He firmly believes Students' Council should take a stand on issues in the international arena.

"Council was right in not passing the motion on apartheid (defeated

by a vote of 23-10); it wasn't consistent," said Hunter. The motion singled out South Africa and ignored violations in other countries.

Council itself will not have a major effect on international issues. Hunter likens council to "a snowball thrown at a big Swede, the snowball does no harm, but if you were to let it go from the top of a hill, as it rolls it gathers more momentum," he said.

Dave Oginski, SU President, thinks council should concern itself with the U of A students' problems. He says, "Council shouldn't be making passive statements that aren't effective."

Oginski's main concern is "to ensure students accessibility to education, quality education, and proper funding for education," he says. He worries over the government reducing funding to the universities by about 5%. "Education can't be sacrificed," Oginski says.

He admits our student populous is affected by international issues and would encourage students to become involved in international issues, or any issue.

Hunter sums up his feelings on international issues, "If an issue and stand are right — try to qualify your stance and stand behind it, you shouldn't be intimidated into not

standing behind it," he said.

He worries some "trendy left issues" don't have enough thought put into them. Apartheid has been around since 1948, and protest has been limited until now. "We need to put apartheid into perspective — while it is very bad, it is not nearly the worst case scenario," said Hunter.

Hunter wants a statement in the books on international affairs, yet his main desire for Students' Council is "building respectability within governing of the Students' Union of the U of A. We must carefully word what we, the SU, are saying, and be adults."

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