

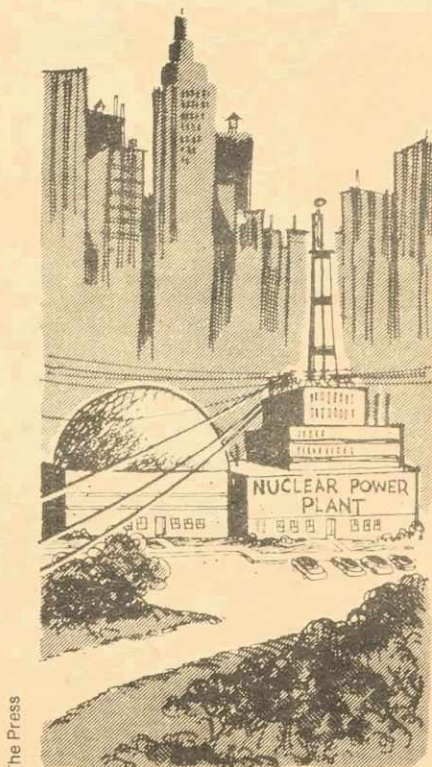
SLOWPOKE PROBLEMS CONTINUE

by donalee Moulton

Last year, the Dalhousie administration announced the installment of a nuclear reactor, slowpoke. This announcement led to a series of confrontations between faculty and administration, especially the faculty of the Psychology Department. Six months later, debate still continues, although the degree of concern appears to have lessened considerably.

The first and major concern of the Psychology Department was the safety of Slowpoke. Most of these concerns have been allayed by the people who will be using Slowpoke, and who fully understand its operation. However, according to Professor Rusak of the Psychology Department, "The safety problem is not one we're ignoring." Base radiation levels were taken before installation, and radiation levels will continue to be monitored. As Professor Rusak points out, many of the faculty members not only spend long hours in the department itself, but they may spend years at the university, often permanently settling in Halifax, and thus radiation effects are definitely a relevant concern.

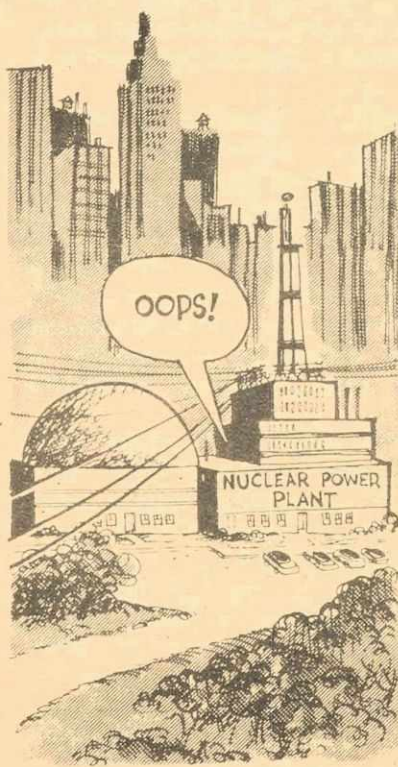
The University Radiation Committee has also recorded radiation levels, and according to the chairperson of the Psychology Department, John Fentress, there has been "no measurable change". When the university administration first announced Slowpoke's arrival, the Psychology Department suggested alternate locations for it. (It is, as was originally planned, located on the ground floor of the



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Life Sciences Centre) Possible locations were then narrowed to two sites the first alternative was rejected on various grounds, but it is apparent that the university definitely wants Slowpoke located directly on campus; the second was rejected on the grounds that it would be too expensive.

Aside from the safety problem, there have been other problems closer to home and of a more immediate nature. According to Dr. Fentress, the installation of Slowpoke resulted in "thousands of hours of lost research time". Those faculty members involved in



developmental studies lost up to two and three years of research time; others had to dramatically readjust their research programs. New faculty also felt the effects of Slowpoke. Professor Rusak was unable to set up his lab due to the blasting necessary for Slowpoke's installation. As a result, Rusak's lab remained unused, and Rusak himself lost six months of research time.

Slowpoke itself is located where the Psychology Department's audio-visual room had been, and consequently this area had to be moved. This meant more disruption within



the department as well as less space.

But the effect of Slowpoke goes even deeper. It has created a morale problem, says Professor Rusak, which "comes from massive cuts in departmental finances." Although this cannot be directly linked to Slowpoke, it is obvious that its installation was a costly venture. (The university to date has not released the figure.)

Superficially, much of the controversy has been laid to rest. Beneath the surface, many of the faculty members are still concerned, and still a little bitter.

Government decreases funding

OTTAWA (CUP) -- Provincial finance ministers rejected federal proposals for the financing of post-secondary education and health insurance last July.

Federal finance minister Donald McDonald's four alternate proposals for negotiating cost-sharing agreements with the provinces gave figures for the federal plan vaguely outline by Prime Minister Trudeau at the first ministers' conference, in June.

The proposals are variations on a

plan which federal officials admit will result in decreased funding for post-secondary education.

Premier William Davis of Ontario acknowledged this at the first ministers conference, and urged the provinces to follow the federal lead and cut back further in their own higher education spending.

Premier Ed Schreyer of Manitoba, however, declared "there are other areas where budgetary cutbacks would seem far more appropriate than in the fields of health and

post-secondary education," and pointed out that the federal government had deferred \$5 billion in corporate taxes last year.

National Union of Students (NUS/UNE) executive secretary Dan O'Connor, who monitored the first ministers conference, said that the federal government's plan "is to dry up the long-term financial resources without which universal accessibility, especially for poor people in poorer provinces, is just an empty phrase."

Federal officials, meanwhile, freely admitted their proposal imposes further provincial spending restraints on post-secondary education, and conceded that severe problems would emerge if participation in post-secondary education increases beyond its current levels. At present, 2 out of every 10 Canadians of post-secondary age attend college or university.

The officials, who asked not to be identified by name, argued their case for further cutbacks by referring to demographic projections that suggest enrolments will decline between 1982 and 1992, assuming that participation remains at the present level.

Questioned later on this point, NUS executive secretary Dan O'Connor accused the federal government of engaging in 'half-truths' to make its case. He said the demographic projections ignore the financial implication involved in a switch to higher-cost academic programs, a trend which is expected to continue for the next decade.

"In addition, they are ignoring the significant regional variations in demographic trends" he said, noting that while a 25 year enrolment decline is predicted for the Atlantic region, other areas, such as British Columbia, expect a continual increase.

NUS feels that such oversights in the government's rationalization of their proposal shows it to be "a screen of vague and admirable principles behind which deep cuts will be carried out," O'Connor said.

The current system - under the Fiscal Arrangements Act (FAA) which expires next April - involves the federal government matching dollar-for-dollar provincial spending on higher education.

The federal proposal would mean a transfer of income tax points to the provinces, with all cash grant increasing according to growth of the gross national product.

At both conferences, provinces were divided in their opposition to the federal plan. The rich provinces supported an Ontario counter proposal calling for federal withdrawal from health and higher education financing, with the transfer of 20 per cent of federal income taxes to the provinces instead.

Saskatchewan and the Atlantic provinces, however, opposed tax transfers because of their small tax bases.

The federal government makes equalization payments to seven provinces to compensate for their weaker tax-raising powers and bring their social and education services up to the national level. Some provinces feared federal proposals to change this formula might result in payment cutbacks.

What united all the provinces at the finance ministers conference was their opposition to the plan to retroactively change the current fiscal arrangements, cutting anticipated provincial revenue by about \$800 million.

The ministers argued the cut will mean higher provincial taxes and reduced standards in education and health.

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