

Radiation contaminates office

VANCOUVER (CUP)—For the past several months abnormally high levels of radiation have been leaking undetected into a University of B.C. office and classroom building and poisoning its residents.

In an accidental discovery September 17, it was found that a basement room in the Math annex at UBC has been used as a storage dump for radioactive material for the past 12 years.

"I've had my death hanging over that room the whole time I've been there," said Professor Jim Carrell after the discovery. His office is located directly above the dump.

Professor Dale Rolfsen uncovered the fact when he became curious about what was in the basement of the annex.

He noticed a sign reading: "Caution Radiation Hazard" on the door of a small basement room and on Monday phoned UBC's radiation protection officer Bill Raychuk

to investigate.

With a borrowed geiger counter, Rolfsen then entered Carrell's office directly above the radioactive area and found it had 14 times the normal level of radiation.

"I'm outraged that people have unwittingly been exposed to fairly high levels of radiation. It's almost criminal when people are exposed to radiation without their consent," he said.

Raychuk discovered that the material emitting the high levels of radiation was a substance known as sodium-22. He found the material in an open cardboard box sitting on top of an empty oil barrel in the basement room, about two feet from the ceiling.

"It is on the oddest of occasions, and you caught me, that we have sodium-22," he said.

Raychuk said he systematically monitors every purchase of radioactive material at UBC, but says it is impossible to keep track of all readings.

Carrell said: "The only thing that I was thinking of was how much of that stuff does he (Raychuk) have in his basement. I'm afraid he's not been doing his job to my detriment," said Carrell.

Raychuk then lifted the radioactive material from the oil barrel and put it on the floor. Next, he went up to Carrell's office to measure the level of radioactivity in his room. It had dropped.

Raychuk pointed out that if the sodium had been placed under lead shielding the radiation level would have been lower.

"I'm embarrassed about this," he said.

Then, mocking Raychuk, Rolfsen replied: "I'm embarrassed that I've been getting exposed to high levels of radiation."

The decision to use the basement room as a way station for radioactive material was made either in 1966 or 1967 by the members of the president's committee of UBC's Radio-Isotopes and

Radiation Hazards.

The current chairman of the committee, Dr. Robert Morrison, said he knew nothing about the radiation dump, nor the identity of the chairman in charge when the decision about the use of the room was made.

Math department head Benjamin Moys said he first heard about the storage dump from Rolfsen.

Raychuk said the room in the Math annex is the only place on campus that is a depository for radioactive materials aside from science laboratories.

"It's one of these temporary things that got carried away," he said.

"I agree that this is not the best of situations and I'd like to move it," said Raychuk. "Maybe something can be arranged if TRIUMF (Tri-University Meson Facility) can get their funds."

"How are we going to notify people, with an advertisement

in the paper? There is a sign on the door."

Rolfsen said it was only a 'fluke' that he discovered the sign on the basement door or otherwise the radioactive material would still be undetected.

"This measurement (of radiation) today was very close to the legal maximum limit," he said.

"This material was put in the room because there was nowhere else for it to go," said Raychuk.

The material in the basement should have been packaged and sent to the depository for radioactive wastes in Chalk River, Ontario, but there was no time to package it up, he said.

Peter Larkin, graduate studies dean and Raychuk's superior, said he did not know about the location of the radioactive material. But he said Monday the department will phone Ottawa today and have the material sent to Chalk River.

MP resigns

Hiring policies questioned

WINNIPEG (CUP)—David Orlikow, MP for Winnipeg North, resigned from the University of Manitoba board of governors during the summer because of the continued hiring of non-Canadians for university positions.

"My major difference with the board and the administration of the university has to do with the continued appointment of non-Canadians to university positions when record numbers of Canadians are graduating with B.A.s, M.A.s, and PhDs in all fields—and are finding it extremely difficult to find positions in Canadian universities or government," Orlikow said in his letter of resignation to board chairperson W.R. McQuade.

Orlikow pointed out that Canada produces between 1,650 and 1,800 PhDs each year.

"It is no longer necessary to import academics to staff our

universities," he said.

At the U of M Orlikow, who was serving his third three-year term on the board, fought for regulations to ensure that normally the best qualified Canadian would be hired to fill an academic position.

Such regulations were adopted in 1976 and 1979, but the board did not accept an Orlikow proposal which would have required the president to explain in detail the relative qualifications of applications whenever a non-Canadian was to be hired.

Orlikow's letter gave examples of the continued preference for non-Canadians in the architecture, library and psychology departments. A non-Canadian dean of architecture will become a tenured professor and be replaced as dean by another non-Canadian in a faculty where between 80 and 90 per cent of the academic staff are not of

Canadian origin.

The university is also trying to hire an American, for the second time in two years, for the psychology department, Orlikow said in his letter, and has hired another American as library head.

"These incidents show that despite massive expenditures of time and money to increase the numbers of highly qualified Canadian academics, and despite their own university's stated policy, senior officials of the University of Manitoba are still trying to hire abroad. My sharp disagreement on this issue means that my continued membership on the board would be pointless."

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