

Dal's big grey disposal unit

by Paul Clark

Like a huge grey toilet, "The Incinerator" sits in the basement of the Tupper Building and swallows up everything from animal carcasses to dope confiscated by the RCMP. It is also the disposal centre for a good part of Dal's radioactive waste.

One worker there estimates about 20 stuffed plastic garbage bags, five containing radioactive waste, are piled into the heavy metal incinerator and burnt to ashes every day. Also inside the bags are chemical wastes from departments upstairs in the Tupper Building, an estimated 100 small and five large animals a day from the nearby Animal Care Centre and the Psychology Department, and material which groups outside Dal occasionally want disposed.

For example, Malcolm Sparks, a worker in the Animal Care Centre which runs the incinerator, said the RCMP comes a few times a year to burn drugs they've confiscated.

"Almost the heaviest load was 300 pounds, from the big one (seizure) down in Mahone Bay, I think", he said.

The Red Cross also brings old blood and blood by-products to be burnt in the incinerator.

The Radiation and Chemical Safety Committee, which operates in the Tupper Building, requires that radioactive refuse be placed in special

orange garbage bags by the departments which use the incinerator. Restrictions are placed on the quantity and strength of the radioactive waste, and it is required that this information be written in black felt pen on the garbage bags.

The incinerator storage and disposal areas are both supposed to be checked periodically for radiation possibly arising from inadvertent spillage or leakage.

Workers handling the refuse are supposed to wear a "lab coat, lead apron, disposable gloves and the appropriate exposure badge".

Other safety requirements, including as well a request for further "ideas and comments", are posted in the Animal Care Centre.

The existence of regulations doesn't always imply their enforcement, however. Pamela Ethridge, who worked loading up the incinerator throughout October, said she didn't wear the required lead apron and has yet to receive a badge to measure the level of radiation exposure.

"They keep sending it back, wanting to know my name and Social Insurance Number."

Dr. Jim Love, the director of the Animal Care Centre, who watched the interview with Ethridge, said, however, exposure to workers handling the radioactive waste is "at a level negligible."

"I probably have the largest exposure, well below even the cumulative limit", he said,

pointing to his work x-raying animals.

Workers in the Animal Care Centre don't seem to be bothered by any possible danger of exposure to radiation.

"I don't worry much", said Sparks.

Dr. Harold Cook, chairman of the Radiation and Chemical Hazards Committee, said the "bulk" of radioactive waste is disposed in the incinerator and "only a small amount" goes down the sink. The solvent is more dangerous in these instances than the waste, he added.

He said he was not aware of any accidents involving radioactive materials since the inception of the safety committee.

Cook also pointed out the committee is "strictly advisory".

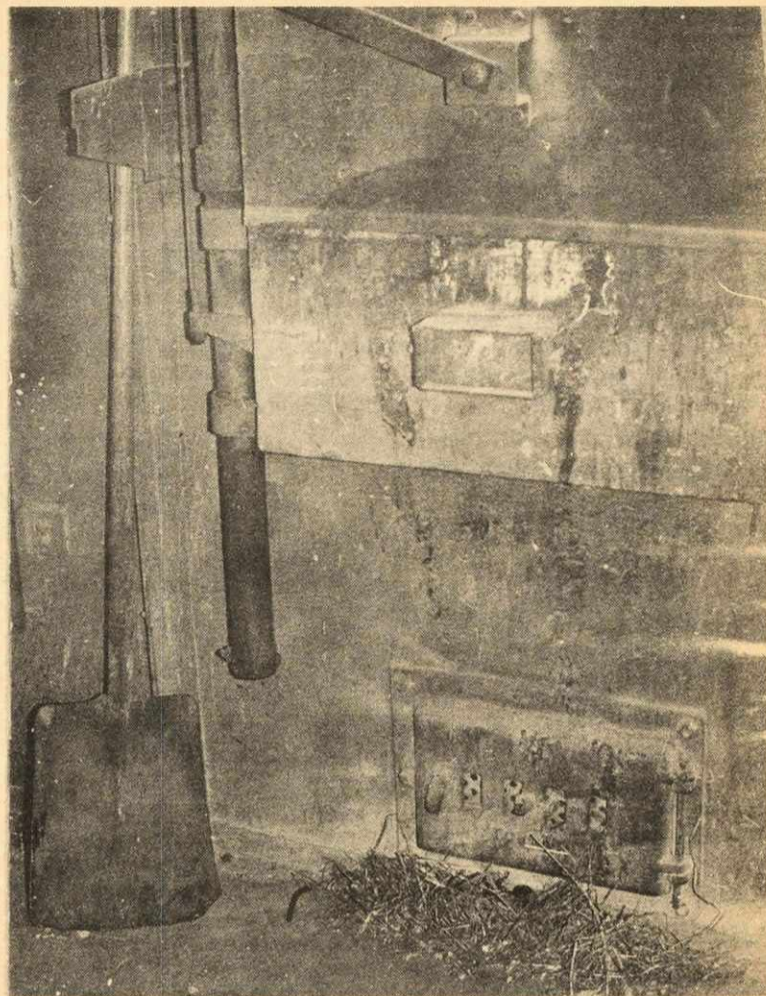
"We don't have the authority to enforce rules and regulations. We can only make guidelines."

He said it is up to individuals working with the materials to see they dispose of them in the right way.

Carbon 14, Tritium and sometimes small amounts of iodine compose most of the radioactive waste, he said.

Substances with longer half lives, such as P32, are allowed to decay in a holding room before being disposed, he said.

Cook also said the Physics and Chemistry Departments have their own disposal systems for radioactive isotopes.



Tupper Incinerator Off-Duty

CTV flip-flops on Transcript of Show

OTTAWA (CUP)—CTV has made a policy flip-flop on its controversial W5 program on international students in Canada, refusing requests for transcripts of the show after earlier saying they would be available.

Jeff Parr, researcher for the National Union of Students (NUS), and Dan O'Connor, a member of NDP MP Lorne Nystrom's staff, both say they were told by CTV that the W5 transcripts were available at a cost of \$10. But they were later told that no transcripts of the program, which has been called highly inaccurate by many government and education officials, were available.

Don Cameron, vice-president of news, features, information and programming at CTV, denies charges that CTV is trying to suppress distribution of the transcripts. He said Oct. 31 that a lack of staff and facilities were the reasons for refusing to distribute the transcripts.

Cameron said if only a few requests had been received CTV would have been able to accommodate them, but the network received so many requests it decided not to

distribute any copies.

"We are not the CBC you know. We do not have all the people to do all that paperwork," he said. "If we give copies to one we will have to give copies to them all."

But Parr says he thinks CTV is trying to suppress distribution of the transcripts because complaints have been made to the Canadian Radio Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) about the accuracy of the CTV program by the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) and the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC).

According to one CTV employee, who was told not to release the transcripts, "when they say you can't release it I don't question their reasoning."

Cameron claimed it was a question of CTV's inability to reproduce enough of the transcripts for distribution that was at the heart of the controversy and said there are some transcripts in public hands, although they are unofficial transcripts made from private recordings of the

program.

W5 executive Lionel Lumb says the program will soon be sending out a "critique of critiques" to organizations that have complained about the program's inaccuracies and distortion of statistics.

The program, aired in September, claimed that international students were keeping Canadian students out of Canadian universities. John Helliwell, of the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) has called the program, "very seriously, and I think, deliberately distorted". Other government officials and education organizations have attacked the accuracy of figures used by W5 and some have termed the program "racist" in its approach to the situation.

But Lumb denies the charges and claims W5 used the latest statistics available and that other organizations' figures are out of date. Cameron said CTV is working on a follow-up report on foreign students that will be broadcast within two months.

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