

Excalibur

Vol. 13, No. 25

York University Community Newspaper

5 April 1979

Protest mounts for Sankaran

By Laura Brown

A veil of secrecy surrounds the procedures as the music department continues to fight for a tenured position for Indian music professor Trichy Sankaran.

Due to budget restrictions, the Academic Policy and Planning Committee had decided to put a freeze on tenured positions and had implemented a policy not to renew most contractually limited positions. Sankaran, in his eighth year at York, has remained under a contractually limited appointment.

Since Sankaran received word last June that his contract would expire in 1979, a number of petitions bearing most of the music students' and faculty members' signatures have been circulated and presented to APCC.

The students engaged in a half hour of hand clapping and singing, when they met with Dean of Fine Arts Joseph Green last week. Approximately 50 students gathered in the lobby of the Fine Arts building on Thursday, March 29 to protest the termination of Sankaran's position.

The students engaged in a half an hour of hand clapping singing, and beating drums, until organizer Laura Walker arrived with Dean Green to talk with the students.

Green told the students that any discussions on this matter which had taken place were confidential and that he couldn't discuss it. Green continued, "I don't know what you're looking for."

When asked what he was doing to secure Sankaran's position, Green replied, "I've made the strongest protest (to APCC) that I can.... we must wait for Bill Farr to come back."

Green informed the students that Farr has been in Florida and is expected back this week.

Student Judy Abrams asked how they could pursue the matter, and Green responded, "I can't give you an answer.... I can't say picket Bill Farr, he's not responsible."

When contacted earlier this week, Sankaran said he is confident that the department is continuing to fight, but did not elaborate on this.

Sankaran also mentioned that the York University Faculty

Association has met to discuss contractually limited cases, but he would not comment on their findings.

The YUFA meeting was held last week, but members will not discuss it. Excalibur contacted the meeting's chairman, Professor Russel Blackmore who simply stated he could not talk about it.

The Head of the Music Department, Alan Lessem, was asked by Excalibur if they are pursuing the fight against APCC's decision.



Gary Hershorn

Ahh Spring... and young thoughts turn to... Well, hopefully to a higher level of concerns than our staff, which has just coughed up a special edition of Nocalibur, (pg.9, 10 and 11.) That's it for us folks, last issue. From the editors — a thank you for giving us a chance. We hope you'll be as nice to next year's Excalibur team, Hugh Westrup and Mark Monfette (story pg. 15).

Lessem replied they were fighting it and would be taking it up with the central administration.

"But this is confidential now and I'm not free to give any information," Lessem added.

Commenting on the decision as it now stands Sankaran remarked, "my feelings are that I should have been offered a full-time position

long ago because I have proved my capacities as a performer and as a teacher in this university."

Sankaran suggested that the administration has not given any serious thought to the educational value of the Indian program which has attracted the tremendous interest of many music students.

He added, "I have not looked upon this as a job situation, but as

a creative program of high educational value... I'm concerned that all I've done will go to waste, and I don't want to see the program removed as it is unique in Canada."

Excalibur approached some of the music students to find out to what they attribute the strong student support.

(see Sankaran pg. 2)

Is nuclear power gamble worth the risk?

By J. Emmet Baumann

Pregnant women and small children were advised to leave town; others were told to stay indoors with their windows closed. As the details of what happened in Harrisburg last week were circulating around the world, people everywhere were shaken up. But no one familiar with the risks inherent in nuclear power was really surprised, when the reactor at Three Mile Island threatened to melt down and force the evacuation of more than a million people, in an accident that came alarmingly close to contaminating an area the size of Pennsylvania with radioactive fallout.

The Risks

The disaster did not come to pass, but the incident has raised doubts more immediate than ever about an industry — supported by social policy — that clearly accepts the risk of such a disaster.

"There is risk in every human activity," said physicist Barry Megaw, currently York University's Chairman of Radiation Safety, whose 20 years of work on establishing safety standards for reactors in England included constructing scenarios for possible accidents and projecting the damage such accidents would cause.

Waste Encouraged

He does not minimize the risks in nuclear power, but sees them balanced by the need for energy. He would like to see that need

rationalized to eliminate the waste that is currently encouraged by Ontario Hydro's own pricing structure (whereby the more power you use, the less you pay).

Any modern industrial nation should strive for energy self-sufficiency; in Canada, and especially in Ontario, oil and gas reserves are short, while natural uranium is abundant.

For that reason Ontario is the centre of Canada's nuclear industry.

Lesser Evil

Megaw's argument is that nuclear is a lesser of several evils: "Of course nuclear energy is an abomination. So coal, so is oil. But how many men have died in the mines?..... If nuclear energy does nothing more than bring men up from underground, the risks would be worth while."

The risks range from the "China Syndrome" — where the core melts down from loss of coolant and possibly explodes, causing deadly amounts of radioactive fallout—to the unknown effects of long-term low level radiation. But these risks are not limited to the reactor itself.

Cancer Threat

Uranium mining threatens the miner with lung cancer and creates one ton of low level radioactive waste for every three pounds of reactor fuel. Most dangerous of all according to most experts, is what comes out of the "back end" of the nuclear cycle in favor of spent reactor fuel.

No safe way has yet been found to dispose of this waste, which is so radioactive it must be kept isolated from all biological life for as long as 25,000 years.

Much of the opposition to nuclear power focuses on this almost incomprehensible time scale. It is unjust they argue, for our generation to create waste that will endanger life and require constant, careful maintenance for a thousand generations to come.

Megaw points out differences between the Harrisburg plant light-water model and the Canadian heavy water reactors, that suggest the Canadian version is safer. The heavy water coolant in the Candu is under considerably less pressure than the light water in American reactors, so it is less likely to rupture a pipe. And in the event that it did, or if for some other reason the radioactive moderator escaped, it would be

sucked into a vacuum building designed for such an accident, and contained there while the core was cooled by emergency cooling systems.

Perhaps the most significant difference between American and Canadian reactors is that the former are, for the most part, owned and operated by private utilities, whose understandable profit imperative must occasionally conflict with the expensive safety imperative demanded by the technology to minimize risks.

(see Nuclear pg. 2)



Party time. Come one and all to the Xcal bliss-out, Friday at 8:00 Check our office for location.

A memorable quote

Maybe nuclear accidents will be part of nature's balance.

Toronto Sun
Editorial
April 4th