

# Slowpoke relatively safe says expert

by Michael Greenfield

On Wednesday, January 8 over 50 people attended an information session concerning the nuclear research reactor Slowpoke II. Mr. Wise of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited and Dr. Hancock who is in charge of the Slowpoke at U. of Toronto came to Dalhousie to extinguish the concern that Slowpoke has generated, particularly among the Psychology and Biology Departments. The presence of high level faculty and some administration people proved how important this meeting was to the future of Slowpoke at Dalhousie.

At the beginning of the meeting it was made clear that the purpose was to discuss the reactor itself and not the site. It was stated that the proposed basement of the Life Sciences building site had not been

given final approval.

Dr. Hancock opened with a presentation of 4 years of performance of Slowpoke I at U of T. He gave statistics as to how the efficient use of the research reactor had increased steadily to the point where demand had necessitated the replacement of Slowpoke I with the more advanced Slowpoke II. He showed slides which highlighted the simplicity of operation. It seems that turning Slowpoke on is not much more complicated than starting your car. He also stressed that over the years there has not been one accident.

One of the main concerns expressed was over the amount of radiation that Slowpoke would add to the surrounding environment. At Toronto radiation counters were placed throughout the Slowpoke

area and in the rooms and areas surrounding. Over an entire year Dr. Hancock, the person most exposed to Slowpoke, received 30 milli rads. It was pointed out that a typical chest x-ray dosed out about 40 milli rads.

Still the idea that even in the rooms adjacent the background radiation would double or triple made some people uneasy. One person commented that society is being regularly imposed with increased doses of radiation without knowing exactly what effect that radiation might have. The medical doctors in the audience pointed out the effects of such radiation have not been fully studied and much remains in the dark.

The fears concerning radiation were most aptly pointed out by Dr. Hancock whose last slides were of

his children. His children were born during the time he has worked with Slowpoke and they were happy and healthy.

The other primary concern centered around the question: What could go wrong? It was pointed out that the reactor core is located about 18 feet below ground and is accessible only to people from AECL. Although a bomb exploding in the area would certainly not be a good thing the impression given was that even this would not do much damage. For many people the problems of the core were incidental and the problems of the radioactive material produced were more important. There have been instances of theft and mishandling of radio-isotopes. However, due to security and stringent Atomic Energy Control Board guidelines the radio-isotopes should be handled properly and safely.

Many people came away from the meeting with the impression that Slowpoke, if handled properly, can be a relatively safe and valuable tool in research. One concern now is that the installation of Slowpoke II will be handled properly.

Dalhousie University is responsible for preparing the site. They must dig the hole and set up the area space for Slowpoke. It is the responsibility of the AECL to install the reactor properly.

Looking further ahead it is then the administration's responsibility to run the operation safely and securely. There will be a Radiation Committee set up and a Radiation Officer to constantly check the activities of Slowpoke. Any infraction of the Atomic Energy Control Board's guidelines will place Dalhousie's operator's license in jeopardy.

What happened last Wednesday is a good, and unfortunately not so common, example of the Atomic Energy of Canada Limited answering the public's questions. Most of the people attending can testify to the value of such question and answer sessions.

## Student Union urges immediate resolution to union problems

Open Letter to:  
Honorable Maynard McAskill  
Minister in Charge of Administration of  
Consumers Services Act  
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Dear Dr. McAskill:

As you may be aware, the maintenance staff of Dalhousie University, comprising the membership of CUPE local 1392, voted on 12 January in favor of strike action at the earliest legal date; 28 January 1976. This vote is only the latest development in a perplexing labor situation that has involved the University and the local since these two parties reached contract agreement in early December 1975.

It is my knowledge that before and after these negotiations, the University was advised by the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission and the Province of Nova Scotia, respectively, that for the contract to be ratified, it must be considered by the Federal Anti-Inflation Board. However, upon submitting the proposed contract to the federal Board in mid-December 1975, the University was informed by the Board that any ruling on the part of the Board would have to await provincial enabling legislation giving the Board jurisdiction in the Province of Nova Scotia.

The result, as I can determine, is the present situation of probable strike action by CUPE local 1392 at Dalhousie University, due to the indecision of both provincial and federal governments. As you may

appreciate, such strike action, inflicted upon but not obviously induced by, Dalhousie University, would nevertheless have a widespread hobbling effect upon the normal operation and academic procedure of the University.

To such a situation, the members of the Dalhousie Student Union raise vigorous objection. As students at Dalhousie University we already are paying, for our education, the highest tuition fees of any public post-secondary institution in Canada. We have no desire to see such direct investment compromised by the resultant educational provisions that such a strike would necessitate at Dalhous-

ie University.

Accordingly the Dalhousie Student Union strongly urges that your office, as the appropriate representative of the Province of Nova Scotia, seek an immediate resolution to this present situation, unilaterally or in conjunction with the Federal Anti-Inflation Board. Such action seems essential if the adverse educational ramifications that such a strike would entail, are to be averted.

Respectfully submitted,  
Bruce Russell,  
President  
Dalhousie Student Union  
Dalhousie University

## Administration letter to C.U.P.E.

Since my circular letter of mid December to members of the Local, the University has sought approval of Government to implement the new collective agreement approved early last month by members of your Local and on behalf of the Board of Governors of the University.

We must seek approval because we have been advised by the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission - that Commission now represents the Government of Nova Scotia in dealing with Dalhousie - that the University is subject to the federal anti-inflation programme. Anti-inflation laws set specific levels for wage rate

increases and prohibit any higher payment without approval of the Anti-inflation Board.

All our efforts to obtain approval to implement the collective agreement have thus far been unsuccessful. The agreement was submitted to representatives of the federal Anti-inflation Board in mid December, but it was only on January 2 that we were finally advised that the Board is not prepared to consider the matter until there is an agreement between the Province and the Federal Government to implement anti-inflation measures. On January 5, advice from the Provincial Government indicates that, even  
Cont'd from pg. 7

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