

Anti-nuke feelings

Bricklin syndrome strikes at Point Lepreau

by Michael Clow

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The Bricklin Syndrome

Much concern has been expressed about the environmental and safety problems involved with the Lepreau nuclear generating station—and with good reason. The whole issue of the viability and desirability of the nuclear-electric future is no longer a fringe issue in Canada. But in the context of the larger issue of nuclear power per se, the Maritime context has been overlooked—the striking parallels between the Bricklin fiasco and the far larger fiasco in the making at Lepreau. The similarities and differences of the two projects bare exploration.

First, both the Bricklin and Lepreau represent a common and erroneous approach to economic development in the Maritimes. Both projects were attractive to the New Brunswick government, not because of their appropriateness to local needs, because as high-technology showpieces they appealed to the desire for

prestige, one-upmanship and vote gathering. It may not be surprising that a state of the art sports car might appeal to Richard Hatfield or the most complex and capital-intensive piece of electric hardware to gadget-obsessed engineers at the New Brunswick Electric Power Commission, but the commitment of the meager resources of a poor province to either project still does not make sense. The long term viability of the technology of both projects were unproven at the time of decision—and still are—and the government simply accepted the wishful thinking of the promoters, Malcolm Bricklin and the Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd., at face value.

The market for both the Bricklin sports car and the electricity from Lepreau were not local ones but uncertain export markets in the United States, markets that evaporated in the general recession leaving the financial backers, the people of New Brunswick, with white elephants on their

hands. The more than "substantial" investment (for Lepreau more than a Billion dollars) of the New Brunswick taxpayers in these will of the wisps will keep them paying interest payments alone to the New York capital markets well into their grandchildren's times, and for precious little return. Worse yet, these grandiose and misdirected schemes have siphoned off the capital available for investment in other more reasonable and labour-intensive projects (such as renewable energy ventures and the fishery) that cater to local needs or reliable export markets. And of course neither Bricklin or Lepreau

have exactly improved the credit-rating or the credibility of the New Brunswick government as a sponsor of mean-

ingful and sound economic development.

Both the Bricklin and Lepreau have been marked by what are now familiar aspects of the pattern of forced and inappropriate development pursued by patronage-ridden and incompetent Third World States. Huge over-runs and cost escalations, staggering mismanagement, and unexplicable terms favourable to Malcolm Bricklin and the now notorious Babcock and Wilcox of Three Mile Island fame, have all become familiar enough to have earned a name—"being brickled." A bad choice of development strategy from square one is compounded by an inability to face the error, or its political costs, and the sane policy of cutting one's losses once the

unsoundness of the project becomes clearly evident, is rejected.

As the Gargantuan example of an advanced case of the Bricklin Syndrome, the effects of the eventual failure of the Point Lepreau project will not be quite so palatable as the embarrassing, and scandalous, economic disaster the Bricklin episode itself was. The size of the debt which will be left and the impact on the future development of the province will be of much more serious proportions. And, of course, the consequences of a failure of the CANDU reactor or the "temporary" storage bays at Lepreau once they go into operation cannot be compared to the loss of an assembly line or defect-filled sports cars.

Has anyone found the lost and found?

by Nancy Ross

Have you lost anything lately and gone to the lost and found department at the SUB inquiry desk to see if it had been found? In most cases if it has been given to this department it will still be there, but this is not always the case.

In the past there has been some complaints that articles turned into the Lost and Found Department have been misplaced again.

For example, Randy Robertson, Night Auditor of the SUB, had put a ring which someone had brought to this department in the drawer of his office desk; the next day the ring was gone.

Another example involved a wallet lost by Jane Ward on December 7 which was handed into the Lost and Found Department the same day. When she went to collect it the next week the wallet could not be found. She was told that someone had either mis-

placed it or had thrown it out.

Now Robertson is attempting to improve this department.

"Articles were misplaced before because there was no control," he said.

A system now exists which requires all articles given to the Lost and Found Department to be recorded in a book. The person handing something in is encouraged to give his name so that if the article has not been claimed in six months the finder can claim it, "as is done in police departments", said Robertson.

If anything of value is handed in, the person working at the inquiry desk is instructed to get in touch with Randy Robertson who has keys to a vault in which it will be placed. Other articles are now put in a room which is padlocked, for which only Robertson has the key.

Even with this system existing, Jane Ward's wallet was

misplaced. Robertson said he was sorry about this but that the people who work behind the inquiry desk are students who are human, who make mistakes. Apparently someone neglected to call or tell Robertson about the wallet so it was just left lying around. Robertson said that aside from this incident the system has worked very well and with everyone doing their part mistakes like this should not occur.

Scarfs, gloves and smaller articles of clothing are usually kept for a few weeks and if not claimed will be given to a church organization or the Salvation Army, Robertson said. Sweaters, coats and other larger articles are often kept for several months before given away. Articles of greater value such as rings, watches etc. have been often kept up to a year or longer.

So if you've lost anything lately give the Lost and Found Department a try, but do it quickly!

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