

Population unit director speaks

Drugs, malnutrition pose threat in pregnancy

By DEBBIE PEKILIS

A mother's age and her actions during her pregnancy have a marked effect on the health of her baby, Dr. Marion Powell, head of the population unit of the U of T School of Hygiene, said Monday.

Speaking on Pregnancy and Childbirth to a group of natural science students, she said that although most women are capable of bearing a child when they are 12 or 13 years old, they actually only have children between the ages of 16 and 45. After they are 45 women "cease to be

productive".

"Pregnancy after the age of 35 produces great risks," she said. "Children who are born to a mother 35 years or older may be genetically defective."

Genetic defects in a child, as well as its sex, can be determined during the first 14 months after birth, she said.

When asked about the effects of drugs on a human fetus, she said, "There is no evidence that there will be defects in children born to drug-users." The LeDain Commission

study produced no evidence that marijuana causes chromosome breakdown.

She did not, however, advise the use of drugs during a pregnancy. She cited the example of thalidomide, a drug once used by expectant mothers, which produced defective babies without arms or legs. Because of this effect, new drugs will not be marketed for a number of years.

One student asked whether doctors are informing pregnant women that their nutrition may have an effect on the health of the baby.

"A good well-balanced diet on the part of the mother is important to the well-being of the baby," Powell said. She pointed out that the mother's eating habits are equally important while the children are growing up, and that to ensure that the children form proper eating habits, she must serve a well-balanced diet and observe a proper pattern.

She stated that children born to mothers who smoke tend to be premature and smaller than children born to non-smoking

mothers.

When asked about her views on abortion, Powell said it should be taken out of the Criminal Code. "Abortion is a decision to be made by the individual couple."

It is impossible for a government to legislate against abortions, she added. If a pregnant woman is forbidden to have an abortion, she will

go to a "back street butcher", or do it herself.

Powell also talked about test tube babies. She said that while it is possible to fertilize a human egg and grow it in incubation, it is not yet possible to deliver the developed fetus without planting it inside a mother's uterus for the final two or three months of development.

New Community for Young Jews

We are a few college-aged people wanting to begin a community of young Jews for people interested in our Jewish Heritage. — not necessarily Synagogue-oriented — no matter how observant-want to share moving Jewish experiences.

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Students "burnt out" by nuclear clean-up

BUFFALO, N.Y. (CUP/LNS) — Nuclear power plants are already accustomed to using moonlighters, impoverished college students and skid-row derelicts to clean up what one official describes as "the dirty end of the nuclear business."

The jobs include repairing nuclear leaks, disposing of nuclear wastes, and cleaning contaminated areas in over 100 nuclear power stations in the United States.

The plants rely on local labour contractors, not wanting their full-time employees to become "burnt out", or exposed to the maximum allowable amount of radiation.

A nuclear plant in Buffalo has suffered breakdowns and nuclear leakage since its opening in the mid-1960s, and has used an average of 1,400 "supplemental workers" to clean it up every year. The plant was shut down in 1972 by the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) but it is still being decontaminated.

An AEC study showed the temporary workers in Buffalo, who were given minimal instructions on the potential hazards of their work, received an average radiation dose four times the amount considered safe for the public, during jobs that sometimes took only minutes.

One local union official says one third of the workers were recruited in Buffalo's skid row.

A former full-time employee at the plant said "the prevalent feeling was that these people were nuts for going in there and doing what they did."

The Buffalo plant is not alone. A Dow Chemical plant in Colorado used crews of college students to decontaminate a burnt plutonium fabrication shop in 1969. And a Commonwealth Edison plant in New York has "burnt out" about 100 welders who were repairing leaks.

Swedish boycott

STOCKHOLM (CUP/ANSI) — The powerful Swedish trades union federation has joined an international boycott of California grapes and lettuce, led by United Farm Workers' Cesar Chavez.

The boycott will hurt California growers severely, as Sweden consumes 80 per cent of the lettuce and two-thirds of the grapes exported to Europe.



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