

The Gem The Gem The Gem

Volume 7, Number 24

The Student Voice of University of Prince Edward Island

Thursday, March 15, 1990

McGill Profs Make Weapons

MONTREAL (CUP) - Recently released documents prove that for 10 years, two engineering professors have been perfecting a high-tech weapon at McGill University.

Mechanical engineering professor Roman Knystautas and John H. Lee have received about \$1 million from the United States Air Force and the federal Department of National Defense (DND) since 1977 to develop Fuel Air Explosives Devices, according to heavily-censored documents obtained through the Access to Information Act.

Weapons experts say Fuel Air Explosives, or FAEs, have a destructive capacity approaching that of nuclear weapons.

The bombs work on the principle that flammable liquids when mixed with air can be ignited, causing pressures over a wide area.

McGill officials say the research is theoretical, abstract science - applied as easily to the gas pedal of a car as to weapons. They also maintain that DND is interested in the results only for the relatively harmless task of clearing minefields.

"If it was weapons, I wouldn't like it," said McGill vice-principal of research Gordon MacLachlan.

MacLachlan described Lee and Knystautas "Canada's experts on explosives."

In 1977 the professors presented a report at a gas dynamics colloquium about "problems pertaining to feasibility of FAE III weapons."

A US government research bulletin says Lee and Knystautas, among other

things, "Reassessed the far field destructive potential of FAE weapons" at McGill in 1979.

Lee and Knystautas currently have a \$156,643 DND contract to "Assess the Effects of Fuel Air Explosions."

The DND, with its subsidiary the Defense Research Establishment Suffield (DRES), supplies many of Lee and Knystautas' more recent contracts.

Copies of current McGill contracts - many classified

- were obtained through the Access to Information Act, and were heavily censored.

DND Information Officer Brian Laidlaw said he could not give details on the professor's present contract, but he did not know it ends in September and will not be renewed. A 1982 paper about the detonation of fuel air explosive clouds, written by Lee, Knystautas, two DRES scientists and two researchers from Norway, stated the research had practical value for "acciden-

tal explosions and military applications."

"It's impossible to tell what it's about, but you can speculate. I would say they are creating small scale models for practical fieldwork experiments at Suffield," said McGill Project Ploughshares member Amy Kaler.

Two years ago, Kaler helped organize a campaign against fuel-air explosive research at McGill, which culminated in three people occupying MacLachlan's office for three days to demand

the cancellation of the contracts.

Partly as a result of student pressures, McGill adopted a screening policy for military contracts last May. Professors are required to describe their research and have it approved by MacLachlan if, in their opinion, it will have "any negative or untoward consequences."

"Both professors Lee and Knystautas said they were not aware of any ill effects, they both wrote that to me,

continued on page 3...

GST on books will hit students hard

MONTREAL (CUP) -- If you're still groaning over the cost of your textbooks this year, just wait until next January.

In 1991, the federal government's proposed goods and services tax (GST) will push the price of textbooks up by at least seven per cent, with Canadian books costing as much as 12 per cent more.

Proposed GST legislation, introduced December 19, is a seven per cent tax which will be added to goods and services at the retail level.

It is designed to replace the hidden manufacturer's sales tax (MST) of 13.5 per cent which is tacked on to about one-third of Canadian manufactured goods before they reach the consumer. The GST is expected to generate \$18 billion in revenue which is what the MST brings in now, according to federal finance department public relations official Rick Doyon. However critics argue that the tax is compounded. It is paid on new books and then again when those books are resold.

The GST will be applied across the board with few exceptions, making books, magazines and newspapers taxable for the first time.

Concern about the effect the tax will have on the Canadian publishing industry has prompted publishers and booksellers to form the Don't Tax Reading Coalition.

The Toronto-based coalition is lobbying the government to exempt the Canadian publishing industry from the GST, as well as encouraging other groups, including students, to join the fight against the tax.

"Students will be hit hardest by this tax," said David Hunt, spokesperson for the coalition. "They spend more on books, magazines and newspapers than anyone else. Students can't refuse to buy compulsory textbooks just because the prices go up."

A study by the Association of Canadian Publishers suggested GST would increase the price of the average Canadian book by 11 or 12 per cent.

"The increase in book prices due to the GST will reduce demand for books and will lead to smaller print runs, smaller or non-existent profits," Hunt said. "This will force publishers to raise prices by more than seven per cent just to make up for lost sales."

The average student with five

courses spends \$400 to \$500 on books, according to Lina Lipscombe, manager of the Concordia University's bookstore.

When the tax kicks in, that will go up to between \$428 and \$560.

"What really infuriates me is that the government is showing all this concern about literacy and then they tax books," Lipscombe said. "Books are a need, not a luxury."

"The government is taxing education."

Lipscombe said Canadian books, which make up approximately 25 to 30 per cent of the texts in university bookstores, are particularly vulnerable to the tax. And students buy a bigger proportion of Canadian books than the general public.

"Students will be paying the tax and the increased prices while other consumers will buy American or not buy at all," Hunt said.

Don't count on savings at used or discount bookstores either. The GST will have to be paid on those sales as well.

Canadian University Press, a national co-operative of student newspapers is also a member of the coalition. The organization

joined the lobby group last month.

Most of the nation's newspapers are also contributing to the campaign: the Canadian Daily Newspaper Publishers Association and the Canadian Community Newspaper Association are members.

The MUSE

Inside

UPEI Today

CIMN

Sports

Environment

Special

Jobs

Comix

In Search of the Green