

U.P.E.I. ARCHIVES

NEWS

Universities fuel weapons programme

MONTREAL (CUP) — Highly enriched nuclear fuel from reactors on five university campuses in Canada is sent to a military plant in the United States where it is used to make bombs for the American weapons programme.

Research reactors at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal, the University of Toronto, McMaster University in Hamilton and the University of Alberta are fuelled with highly enriched uranium (80 per cent uranium 235) or "weapons grade" uranium.

This uranium is bought from the U.S. Department of Energy by the Atomic Energy Commission of Canada Limited (AECL, a crown corporation).

The used uranium, still high in uranium 235, is shipped to the Savana River Plant in South Carolina where it is

re-processed into plutonium and tritium for H-bombs, according to documents provided by Dr. Gordon Edwards, president of Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility.

The plutonium generated at Savana is then shipped to Rocky Flats, Colorado where it is made into triggers for atomic bombs. The tritium is used to enhance the explosive power of the bombs.

The money made from this transaction pays for the next shipment of fuel to Canada.

These deals violate the Nuclear Co-operation Agreement between the United States and Canada, dating back to 1955, which bans the use of nuclear materials supplied by Canada for military purposes.

Edwards, who has been investigating Canada's contribution to the production of bombs said, "The financial

returns must be pretty small. Just enough to get more fuel."

"The fuel is our lollipop from the U.S. military, and their way of buying friends and diffusing antagonism toward their weapons programme," Edwards said.

The smaller reactors at four of the campuses cost about \$200,000 to refuel. Refuelling the McMaster reactor ten times the size of the others, runs in the millions, according to Fred Davediuk, manager for research facilities at AECL.

Davediuk said Canada is obligated under a binding contract to return the spent fuel to the United States because it was theirs to begin with.

However, a report from the United States General Accounting Office (Dec. 13, 1984) confirms that no such contract exists and the title

to spent fuel remains with the country that bought it.

Chief Public Officer in the AECL, Hugh Spence, claimed the same thing in a letter to Quebec Townships Peace in August 1984. He also said the spent fuel was definitely re-processed for civilian purposes.

He later had to retract his statements. Even though he had to admit the fuel was used at a military plant, he said in another letter to the peace group that the United States agreed to take an amount equal to the Canadian shipment out of the military re-processing drums and put it into civilian ones.

However, Edwards called Savana River and found they only have one drum and it was for military production only.

"They are either lying or incompetent," said Edwards about AECL officials.

University reactors are

re-fuelled every 5-10 years, except for the McMaster reactor which is re-fuelled every couple of years. The shipments to and from the United States take place in secret.

The peaceful research at universities is applied to industry, agriculture and health. For example, the level of arsenic in our drinking water can be tested by putting strings of human hair in the reactor and bombarding it with neutrons. The arsenic in the hair will become radioactive and it can then be measured and studied.

However, according to Edwards, every experiment now being done with nuclear fuel can also be done in non-nuclear accelerators which the University of British Columbia and McGill University use. These accelerators charge non-nuclear particles to a very high speed which induces radioactivity.



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