

News from the Society of Energy Professionals

Nuclear safety at risk?



Globe and Mail columnist John Ibbitson spoke at the Canadian Nuclear Conference in February. The industry could do a better job of promoting the obvious benefits of nuclear power, he said. (See article, p. 8)

The Society has taken action to reverse an OEB ruling demanding that OPG suppress wages and salaries in its nuclear division. While the media initially applauded the apparent savings for ratepayers, the Society argues that caving in to the Energy Board's demands could threaten nuclear safety.

"The Energy Board appears to be unaware that it has no right to determine safe levels of staffing at nuclear stations,"

said **Rod Sheppard**, Society President. "The Board's duty is to approve expenditures that are reasonable and prudent, and we say staffing that's approved by the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission is always reasonable, always prudent."

The Society has challenged the ruling in the Divisional Court of Ontario, arguing that the Energy Board overstepped its legal mandate. Sheppard also has written to the CNSC, warning members of the commission of the Society's concerns. "We told the Commission that OPG's being pressured to cut costs without regard to the effects on public safety," he said.

Previously the Society had written directly to Energy Minister Brad Duguid to express its concern. The Minister informed the Society through a representative that he would not reply.

The OEB ruling concerns the rates OPG will be paid for electricity generated in its regulated business for the years 2011 and 2012. The part of OPG generation that is regulated includes nuclear and most baseload hydroelectricity. OPG's non-regulated generation receives the "market" price, that is, is **not** regulated by the Energy Board.

OPG's rates application was under pressure before it was made. In May, 2010, OPG announced they'd be seeking a 9.6 per cent increase. At the time, there was speculation in the media that prices under *Green Energy Act* procedures would result in a 25 per cent increase in electricity prices for this year. In apparent shock, Energy Minister Brad Duguid first ordered OPG **not** to apply for any increase at all. In the end, OPG applied for a 6.2 per cent increase.

But even 6.2 per cent was too much for the Energy Board panel that considered the application. The Board ruled that

OPG spent too much money on salaries, singling out the nuclear division as the culprit. Citing a “management study” they’d directed OPG to pay for, they said:

ScottMadden concluded that there was room for a potential reduction of 48 FTEs (28%) in the Radiation Protection Function, of which 13 FTEs could be eliminated altogether. Despite these findings, OPG failed to act on an opportunity to eliminate 13 FTEs, and instead eliminated only one.

The Board panel said they had something more like a one per cent rise in mind. OPG is now under an obligation to come back to the Board with a plan more to the Board’s liking.

“I don’t know when ScottMadden and the Ontario Energy Board decided they had the right to make decisions about levels of staffing in nuclear safety,” said Sheppard, “let alone the very serious tasks in radiation protection, but apparently they have.” He noted that nuclear safety is clearly in the jurisdiction of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, not the Ontario Energy Board.

Energy Minister Brad Duguid seemed pleased by the ruling, saying, “I think this shows the OEB is doing their due diligence and fulfilling their mandate to look after the public interest and the interest of energy consumers.” The Minister did not explain how, as the shareholder who obviously had to approve the 6.2 per cent request before it could be submitted to the Board, he could be pleased that his own application had been turned down.

In its appeal to the Court, the Society argues that the OEB is legally bound to pass on OPG costs that are “reasonable and prudent.” Though the *Energy Board Act* has an objective of “protect[ing] the interests of consumers with respect to prices,” the Society will argue that that is not its sole objective. “The question isn’t whether OPG is providing the cheapest power possible,” says Sheppard. “It’s whether OPG is producing affordable, reliable, quality electricity, incurring expenditures that are reasonable and prudent.”

Society salaries are set in collective bargaining under the *Labour Relations Act*. In the Society’s case, if salaries cannot be settled in two-party bargaining, they are determined by an arbitrator. “What reasonable lawyer would argue that salaries set by an arbitrator are not ‘reasonable and prudent,’” said Sheppard.

The Society will also argue that the Energy Board is not competent (in the legal sense, that is, does not have the ability or jurisdiction) to determine levels of staffing at nuclear facilities in Ontario, especially in areas affecting public safety. Such matters are clearly the purview of the CNSC. Expenditures on nuclear safety, as determined by OPG, workers’ health and safety representatives, and the CNSC are, by definition, reasonable and prudent.

“I hope somebody comes to their senses before this matter gets to court,” Sheppard said. “Nuclear safety is too important to be left in the hands of cost-cutters.”

No hearing has yet been scheduled into the Society’s application for judicial review.

Society touts Darlington new-build

Ontario’s CANDU reactors are operated safely now, and new-build at the Darlington site can only make the nuclear component of the electricity system safer, said Society President **Rod Sheppard**.

The construction and operation of Darlington new build can and will be safely accomplished. The Society is uniquely situated and uniquely motivated to act as an additional safeguard of the public trust. Society members are actively involved in continuous improvement of workplace and public safety, and our track record is excellent.

Sheppard spoke at the hearings of the Joint Review Panel (JRP) examining the Darlington New Nuclear Power Plant project. The JRP is an independent body mandated by the CNSC and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency to conduct a study into potential effects on the environment of building and operating new reactors on the Darlington site.

Employees are the “first in harm’s way” if the highest standards of safe operation of OPG’s nuclear plant were to be compromised, and members of the Society are in a “unique” position to “act as an additional safeguard of the public trust.” Society-represented employees had a lot to do with the development of OPG’s environmental assessment, he noted.

Our members and their families live in the Clarington and Durham communities and their children drink the same water and breathe the same air as all the local residents. Because of our occupational position, training and experience, and thanks to our independent role in the internal responsibility systems at OPG, we are in a position to enforce the most stringent of standards, and we do.

Sheppard outlined the levels of tripartite health and safety administration at OPG, in place over and above that required by the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. Management at all levels has no choice but to be engaged in safety matters, because the Society is active on all levels, and insistent that the highest standards obtain.

“Annual public doses from Darlington site have always been sig-

nificantly lower than the regulatory limits and the annual average Canadian background radiation doses,” he said. He also drew the panel’s attention to the Darlington site’s 2007 international ALARA (as low as reasonably achievable) Award.

Sheppard also discussed the social and economic benefits new nuclear would bring to the Clarington area,

The recession of 2008 has certainly seen job losses in this area, ...particularly in the auto manufacturing. Good jobs create healthy markets and prosperous communities will come with this new build. Many of these new jobs that have been have been created [in the wake of the economic downturn] have less

“Our members and their families live in the Clarington and Durham communities and their children drink the same water and breathe the same air.”



The Society presented its endorsement of new nuclear at Darlington at the hearings of the Joint Review Panel. (l to r) David Romanowicz, Staff Officer Mike Belmore, Society President Rod Sheppard, OPG Local VP Joseph Fierro, and Darek Kulczynski.

stability, security, and income than those that have been lost.

New build at Darlington will create the kind of highly skilled, well-paid, high-tech jobs the economy desperately needs, he said, not to mention all the jobs and procurement orders arising from the construction phase.

Darlington new build will reassert Canada’s long-held position as a major international player in the field of nuclear energy. It will be a catalyst to propel both established and new players towards the next generation of breakthroughs in nuclear science and technology. It will be a catalyst to improve post-secondary school institutions; involve an enrollment in the college and university programs and provide training relevant to the nuclear industry. And it will be part of the development of skilled journey persons to replace today’s aging and dwindling construction force.

Sheppard informed the panel that the Society is actively engaged in supporting the post-secondary programs in nuclear sciences and engineering at the University of

Ontario Institute of Technology, programs that will help educate the young workers that will be needed to take over today's generation of nuclear workers.

And nuclear generation of electricity, he noted, will be an indispensable element in Ontario's effort to improve its carbon footprint, moving away as much as possible from the use of fossil fuels.

Panel Chair Alan Graham asked if the Society had anything to say if the government ended up choosing a technology other than CANDU—would today's Society members be able to cope with such a significant change? Of course, said Sheppard. Continuous training and skills upgrading is something Society members do all the time. If there's non-CANDU plant, members would adjust they way they always do.

People are excited about what's going on. I don't think it'll take much motivation to get people engaged in this and the technology doesn't matter. The mindset is there, the encouragement—certainly encouragement from this organization. This is after virtually 20 years of waiting for something to happen here, I think we're on the edge of doing something creative again in this industry.

The Society received some impromptu backing from a student in the audience —identified in the records as one Mr. Lahadee—who was allowed on short notice to address the panel. He identified himself as one of the young people Society representatives had been talking about, excited to be on the cusp of new development in the industry.

I can assure you that the training that I've received through university and through the industry was designed [with] different technologies in mind, and in terms of willingness to understand the new technology that the new build will bring. I'm very confident that my generation and myself are very eager and very confident that we can go on with it

Mr. Sheppard was accompanied in his presentation by OPG Local VP **Joseph Fierro**, unit director **David Ro-**

manowicz, delegate **Darek Kulczynski**, and Staff Officer **Mike Belmore**.

Board highlights: March-April

The Society Executive Board met on Tuesday, March 1st and Tuesday, April 5th.

Recognition: The Executive Board recognized the following for outstanding contributions to the Society:

- ◆ The Hydro One Local's **Gerry Pitre** for his work on Bill C-45 (see article, p.11). Gerry lives and works in the Sudbury area, a community hard-hit by Vale Inco's strikebreaking campaign of 2009-10.
- ◆ Senior Financial Officer **Joan Florence** all her work in budget preparation and preparation for the year-end audit

Executive Committee: In its first meeting of any fiscal year, the Executive Board elects three of its members to sit on the Executive Committee. Only three were nominated, and so will serve: **Joseph Fierro**, OPG Local VP; **Tracy**



On March 17th, six days after a tsunami wiped out backup generation at TEPCO's Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear plant, the Society called a media conference to explain why nothing similar could happen in Ontario. [l to r] Staff Officer Mike Belmore, President Rod Sheppard, and Darlington's Ron Boss.

Miller, Vertex Local VP; and **Keith Rattai**, Hydro One Local VP.

The three join the four Principal Officers and the Society Staff Director (*ex officio*—no vote).

Budget: The Executive Board approved a budget for the 2011-12 fiscal year. See the next Newscast for a detailed report.

Board meetings: As an element of the discussion around the 2011-12 budget, the Board reduced the number of its meetings to eight from 12. There will be no Board meeting in May.

OEB Local: Edik Zwarenstein, VP of the OEB Local, reported that a necessary component of his local's effort to bargain a first renewal agreement was to prepare for a possible strike or lockout. In doing so, his local was proposing the Board approve an increase in strike pay, and, given that there would be no Board meeting in May,

that decisions around strike-avoidance be referred to the Executive Committee.

The Board approved a motion that “encourages locals and members to participate in support actions requested by the OEB Local to ensure that the negotiations end successfully.”

Strike pay policy: The Executive Board approved a change to the levels of strike pay in the event of a strike or lockout. Members who engage in “strike activity”—usually picket duty—of 20 hours per more a week receive \$250 per week in the first four weeks of a strike/lockout, and \$500 per week in any additional weeks. The Board increased the amounts to \$300 and \$600 respectively.

Audit Committee: The Board appointed **Mike Delmar** to the Audit Committee. The Audit Committee is the body that oversees the annual audit of the previous fiscal year. The Inergi Local's Delmar, a Certified General Accountant, has more than 20 years of experience in public accounting and corporate finance.

Sponsorship: The Society has been approached by the University of Toronto Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources, CUPE 3902 at the University of Toronto, and Ryerson University. They are organizing an event to raise awareness of the connection between the Wisconsin state government's campaign to limit collective bargaining rights, and ongoing events in Ontario, such as the Ontario governments “wage restraint” legislation, and recent legislation classifying TTC employees “essential workers.”

Canadian-born Harvard University professor Elaine Bernard is slated to be one of the speakers. The Board agreed to put \$2,000 toward this very worthwhile event.



On March 8th, International Womens Day, Sisters in Society organized an event in the mezzanine of Hydro One HQ in Toronto, celebrating IWD and fundraising for Shannen's Dream. (l to r) OFL's Terry Downey, staffer Laura Langmaid, Shirley Kung (OPG), Dianne Mowat (Inergi), Michelle Byck Johnston (Hydro One), and the OFL's Marie Kelly.

NWMO settles renewal collective agreement

The Nuclear Waste Management Organization Local has reached a two-party deal on a new collective agreement.



NWMO Local's Jose Freire-Canosa, pictured at January's all-Ontario rally in support of striking steelworkers in Hamilton.

"The members are pretty happy with this agreement," said NWMO Local VP **Jose Freire-Canosa**. "We were under a lot of pressure, but we came up with some gains."

Freire-Canosa explained that while the NWMO comes under federal jurisdiction, some 95 per cent of its funding comes from OPG. "I think there was a lot of pressure on Management from the McGuinty wage-freeze program," he said. "It was providential that negotiations took place after the arbitration ruling on the OPG Local was published, and before the OEB ruling on OPG rates." (See *Newscast* 2010:04.)

He said the NWMO settlement is very similar to the OPG renewal. Highlights include:

- ◆ Two-year collective agreement, covering January 1st, 2011 to December 31st, 2012
- ◆ Wage increases of 3.0 per cent for 2011; 2.0 per cent on January 2nd, 2012; and 1.0 per cent on April 2nd, 2012
- ◆ Equity in parental leave for parents of both sexes

There was a "give." Employees hired into the Society bargaining unit for the construction of the Deep Geological Repository will be classified as temporary employees.

A Letter of Understanding sets out that the Purchased Services Agreement will be suspended for contract work under \$24 million total for 2012 and \$30 million for 2013. For the term of that Letter, coverage for drug dispensing fees will increase to \$11.00 from 5.00, and all deductibles will be eliminated.

This renewal collective agreement marks the first negotiations success of the NWMO Local on its own. The Local was created in January, 2009 when around 30 OPG employees were spun off to the new organization (see *Newscast* 2008:04), taking the terms of the OPG Local's agreement with them.

The NWMO Local's bargaining team consisted of Freire-Canosa, delegates **Michael Borrelli** and **Andre Vorauer**, and Society Staff Officer **Mary Donnelly**.

Bruce Local re-bargains, re-terminates

Renewal of the Bruce Power collective agreement is headed to mediation/arbitration, after a brief flurry of two-party bargaining. The Society's team left the bargaining table on March 30th.

"The Company is making an extraordinary ask, but not offering anything that meets our members' needs," said Acting Local VP **Shirley Hayes**, noting:

In January, CEO Duncan Hawthorne asked both bargaining teams to get back to the table and work something out. [The Society's] always been committed to coming up with a two-party agreement. It looked like the teams refreshed their desire to come up with something, so we went back.

In December bargaining had broken off in a fair bit of acrimony, as both parties accused the other of engaging in unfair labour practices. (See *Newscast* 2010:03.) Under

Ministry of Labour mediation, the charges are in abeyance as the Society and Management work on resolving their differences, which hasn't happened yet.

"We ended up in the same impasse," says Hayes.

Bruce Power management sent a letter directly to Society-represented employees. In it, Ian McGinty, EVP Human Resources, claims the Society bargaining team is "misleading" its members, as the management team has not "sought significant concessions." He appears to reason that since Management's proposal to tear up the Purchased Services (contracting out) Agreement is accompanied by some job guarantees, it's a wash.

Most union leaders would agree that the removal of a set of clauses that are integral to the bargaining relationship would be a "concession," no matter how many job guarantees accompany it.

"It's a matter of whether our jurisdiction is open or closed," said Unit Director **Bob Wells**. "Members can see that management would gain the power to give our union jobs to anyone on the street or offshore, at whatever price. We know management is advancing such discussions with various Canadian and non-Canadian agencies. We intend to struggle to retain our jobs, pay, and benefits, right here in Bruce County."

A mediation meeting is scheduled for June 23rd. If unsuccessful, arbitration will take place in August.

Myette now Bruce Power Local VP

Dave Myette has been elected Bruce Power Local VP.

Chief Returning Officer **Paul Czuczman** circulated the results of balloting in the afternoon of April 28th. They were:

Merv Holmes	142
Waldemar Janowski	52
Dave Myette	190

"I'm happy with the results," said Myette, "and I'm looking forward to working with the Society office and our local committee." Myette also complimented candidates

Janowski and Holmes on their campaigns. "I was pleased with their professionalism," he said.

Myette is a first-line manager at Bruce Power A. He spent many years with Ontario Hydro and Bruce Power as an industrial electrician, and was formerly a Chief Steward with the PWU. He's been in the Society bargaining unit since 2006, when he was promoted to FLM. He became a delegate in 2007, was serving until being elected Local VP

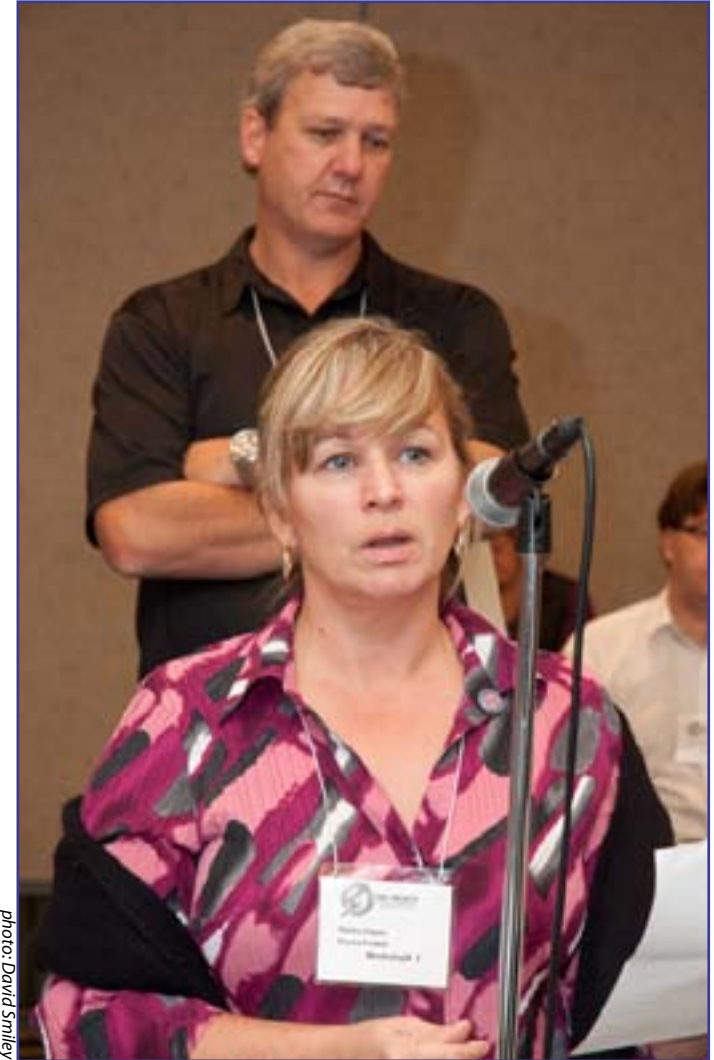


photo: David Smiley

The Bruce Power Local's Dave Myette (rear) has been elected to take over for formerly Acting Local VP Shirley Hayes.

as an acting unit director, and is currently on the bargaining team that's negotiating a renewal contract.

The members of the Society bargaining unit "contribute to the success of the company like no other employee group. We deserve to be treated in a manner befitting this higher level of responsibility." In his campaign literature he said he'll work "to ensure that that relationship is restored and enhanced."

To that end, he said, "Our first priority is to get a collective agreement that treats us fairly."

Myette replaces **Shirley Hayes**, who was serving as Acting Local VP. The VP position became vacant when former VP **Rob Stanley** was elected Executive Vice President Finance of the Society.

Hydro One ordered to reimburse municipal land transfer tax

A land transfer tax is a land transfer tax, an Ontario arbitrator has ruled. Hydro One must reimburse all of them for an employee transferred from the Windsor area to Toronto.

Hydro One had refused to reimburse one of its professional employees for the municipal land transfer tax.

The collective agreement requires the Employer to reimburse "land transfer tax" expenses when an employee moves her/his household due to a transfer or new position. Management argued that requirement only refers to the **provincial** land transfer tax. There were no **municipal** land taxes when moving expenses were originally provided for in the Society/Ontario Hydro agreement, so there is no requirement that the Employer reimburse, they argued.

Employer reps also pointed to the word "tax" as illustrative of their point. If more than the provincial land transfer tax had been meant, the word would have been "taxes."

Au contraire, ruled Arbitrator Robert J. Herman. The stipulations in question are part of a wider set of obligations on the Employer when transferring employees. The Employ-

er's arguments didn't fit with what the articles clearly set out as their purpose: "Hydro One recognizes that there may be a number of relatively costly expenditures associated with moving and will endeavour to ensure that such expenses will be adequately covered."

Just as the Employer would be responsible if the Province increased the amount of land transfer tax owed on a transaction, the Society submits, so too is Hydro One responsible when a new land transfer tax is imposed that increases the cost of land transfer taxes.

Arbitrator Herman accepted the Society's arguments, and awarded that the grievor be fully reimbursed, an amount in excess of \$5,000.

The Society was represented by counsel Michael J. Wright, of Cavalluzzo Hayes Shilton McIntyre & Cornish.

Ibbitson: Nuclear, you could be tougher

It would be "folly" not to expand the role of nuclear power as a source of virtually carbon-free energy," says *Globe and Mail* columnist John Ibbitson.

"We need to meet rising global demand for energy while lowering carbon emissions," he said. "The truth is there is absolutely no such thing as green energy. All energy is various shades of brown."

Ibbitson was a keynote speaker at the conference and trade show of the Canadian Nuclear Association. The event took place from Feb 24th to 26th, in Ottawa.

The truth is, he said, "Nuclear energy is one of the least brown of all. Its carbon emissions are absolutely minimal. And Canadian reactors have been operating safely in Canada and around the world for six decades."

He noted that Canada's nuclear industry generates \$6 billion in economic activity, \$1.5 billion in federal and provincial revenues, and \$1.2 billion in exports.

Though he didn't say it in so many words, he clearly thinks the desire of the federal government to sell AECL is short-sighted.

Speaking of the growing pains and cost overruns in the nascent business of refurbishing CANDU reactors, he said, "Throwing out all the healthy, encouraging, high-potential parts of Canada's nuclear industry because one facet of that industry has encountered problems is not only counter-productive, it's foolish. It puts tens of thousands of jobs and a large part of our national research and development infrastructure at risk."

Cagily, Ibbitson assured his audience he wasn't suggesting "Brand Canadian nuclear" put out any "attack" ads. But if they did, he said, a good one might go like this:

Picture images of cities at night humming along, doctors and nurses attending patients, assembly lines thriving. But the music is ominous, and that sort of deep baritone narrator that they always bring out, his voice grave. "For 60 years, nuclear power has been delivering safe, clean, affordable energy in Canada



photo: Bob Davis

British author/activist George Monbiot, pictured at a 2010 "Take back Parliament" demonstration, advocating for proportional representation for the UK parliament.

and around the world. But now some politicians want to sell our nuclear industry off and shut it down, which will cost thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in lost revenue, while closing the door on the next generation of energy and medical research." Pictures of empty labs, and abandoned factories. "And they're doing this just as the demand for nuclear energy is skyrocketing in China, India, and other countries. The next time a political candidate asks for your vote, ask back: What are they doing to make sure that 71,000 Canadians working in nuclear continue to keep our industries leading the world as Canada moves toward a low-carbon future.

"Politicians and the public need to know what's at stake," he said.

Monbiot vs. Caldicott: the Fukushima debate

For a month and a half, eyes have been glued to the events in Fukushima Prefecture in Japan, where a post-earthquake tsunami took out backup generation at Tokyo Electric Power Company's (TEPCO's) Dai-ichi plant on the Fukushima coast.

The TEPCO crisis has inspired wild speculation, chest-thumping accusations of nuclear nightmares, fear of radiation leaks, and a Greenpeace occupation of the hearings into the Joint Review Panel's environmental assessment of new-build at Darlington (see article, "Society touts Darlington new-build," p.2).

Though always a hot topic, nuclear power has never been hotter. One of the most fascinating debates around the crisis in Fukushima has to be the conversion of his views on nuclear of writer George Monbiot, of the UK's *Guardian*. Ten days after the Tsunami, he published on his *Guardian* blog an article entitled, "Why Fukushima made me stop worrying and love nuclear power." "As a result of the disaster at Fukushima," he wrote, "I am no longer nuclear-neutral. I now support the technology."



photo: Camosun College

Helen Caldicott in 2008 at Camosun College in Victoria, BC

A crappy old plant with inadequate safety features was hit by a monster earthquake and a vast tsunami. The electricity supply failed, knocking out the cooling system. The reactors began to explode and melt down. The disaster exposed a familiar legacy of poor design and corner-cutting. Yet, as far as we know, no one has yet received a lethal dose of radiation.

(N.b. He was wrong about the reactors “exploding.”) He took issue with the cries of those such as Greenpeace predicting a nuclear apocalypse. “Atomic energy has just been subjected to one of the harshest of possible tests, and the impact on people and the planet has been small.”

Monbiot’s column surprised a lot of people. He’s an environmental and political activist of impeccable credentials who considers climate change “the moral issue of the 21st century.” As an activist for the rights of indigenous and tribal peoples, he’s been sentenced *in absentia* to life imprisonment in Indonesia, and been shot at, beaten up, and shipwrecked in Brazil. As a participant in the “roads

protest” movement in the UK, he was attacked by security guards, who allegedly drove a metal spike through his foot.

In 2009, in an article on the exploitation of Alberta’s tar sands and the Canadian government’s disruption of world environmental negotiations, he referred to Canada as a “thuggish petro-state.”

We’re not used to such people being pro-nuclear.

Possibly neither was Amy Goodman, of the popular web-based TV program “Democracy Now.” On March 30th she invited Monbiot to participate in a discussion on Fukushima and nuclear power opposite Helen Caldicott, well-known anti-nuclear activist, and author of *If you love this planet*, as well as several other anti-nuclear tomes.

Monbiot’s point was basically that the crisis at Fukushima was bad, but burning fossil fuels produces more deaths when *everything works as it’s supposed to*.

Caldicott argued that the situation approached the catastrophic.

The Guardian yesterday reported that Unit No 2 had actually melted down. The fuel had melted through the reactor vessel onto the concrete floor below. That is a problem because the zirconium in the fuel reacts with the concrete, and it could form a huge hydrogen bubble like happened at Three Mile Island. There could be a huge hydrogen explosion, which would rupture the containment vessel, and out of Unit 2 would come huge plumes of radiation, which, if the wind is blowing towards the south, could devastate much of Japan forever, or it could be blown across the Pacific towards the American—North American continent and around the globe, indeed, and pollute the whole of the northern hemisphere.

(N.b. The *Guardian* **did** report that there was the **appearance** of a meltdown, based on a US examination of Dai-ichi radiation levels, but it turned out not to be true.)

She called it the “most extreme situation in nuclear power,” worse even than Chernobyl. She claimed that up

to a million people had died from Chernobyl, and that the United Nations study that found few deaths was a “total cover-up” and “a lie.”

The Caldicott-Monbiot dust-up didn’t end there. On April 5th, Monbiot wrote a confessional, in “The unpalatable truth is that the anti-nuclear lobby has misled us all.”

The anti-nuclear movement to which I once belonged has misled the world about the impacts of radiation on human health. The claims we have made are ungrounded in science, unsupportable when challenged, and wildly wrong. We have done other people, and ourselves, a terrible disservice.

He recounted his efforts to get Caldicott to supply him with scientific references for some of her more outlandish claims, receiving in return news clippings and newspaper articles. Caldicott responded on April 11th, with “How nuclear apologists mislead the world over radiation.” Monbiot eviscerated the claims of this article two days later, with “Nuclear opponents have a moral duty to get their facts straight.”



photo: www.onechange.org

MPP France Gélinas checks tire pressure at the Canadian Tire in Chelmsford, 2010.

There is much more lively debate going on, both in the *Guardian* and around the world. On the *CounterPunch* web-site, a medium that’s run many Monbiot articles, Joe Giambrone, a film-maker with unknown scientific credentials, called Monbiot a “moron” and a “shill for the nuclear industry.”

Monbiot argues that decisions on nuclear power should be made on the science, science produced by scientists, and peer-reviewed. He says environmentalists should subject their own beliefs to the same rigour they expect from others.

He’s right.

(All Monbiot articles available at the *Guardian* web-site. The Monbiot-Caldicott debate is available on the Democracy Now web-site.)

Liberal/Tory coalition kills strike mercenary ban

An attempt by MPP France Gélinas (Nickel Belt) to outlaw scabs (often called “replacement workers”) has killed in second reading by a coalition of Liberals and Conservatives.

“Things have changed since the ban [on replacement workers] was lifted,” says Gélinas. “Over 280,000 people have lost their jobs. There are goon temp agencies that recruit them, promising them good work in their field. Then they find out the truth, that they’re there to take a striker’s job.”

Gélinas sponsored a private member’s bill to ban strike mercenaries, which, with the support of some Liberals, passed first reading.

The Society participated in a campaign to petition the Legislature to pass Gélinas’s bill, collecting over 1,000 signatures out of the 16,000 presented to MPPs on Thursday, March 30th.

Hiring replacement workers was illegal for a time in the early 90s, banned by the government of then-NDPer Bob

Rae. Mike Harris's Tory government lifted the ban in 1995.

Scabs have played crucial roles in strikes recently; At Vale Inco in Sudbury, the Brazil-based employer provoked a strike and imported strike mercenaries to do the strikers' work. The strike lasted for over a year. In Brantford, US-owned Engineered Coating Products (ECB) demanded huge concessions from its employees, provoking a strike that started in 2008, and then shut the plant down entirely last month.

Labour leaders argue that the ability to hire strike mercenaries makes strikes more likely, as employers who plan to hire them aren't motivated to bargain seriously with their unions. Strikes with scabs also tend to be longer, and more violent.

In the ECB case, Steelworker head Wayne Fraser directly blames the lack of a scab ban for the employer's actions. While ECB was strikebreaking and closing down plant in Ontario, it reached agreement with the union in its facilities in British Columbia. From Exchange, March 25th:

"ECP workers in B.C. negotiated six per cent raises and improvements to their benefits and pension, without a labour dispute," Fraser noted.

That's because BC has anti-scab legislation that protects working families from the senseless attacks on jobs and working conditions that Dalton McGuinty continually allows in Ontario.

The case for voting against was put by Liberal MPP Bob Delaney, who told the *Toronto Sun* a ban on scabs would give "an unfair advantage to striking workers in a labour dispute," adding that nothing prevents strikers from finding other work.

NDP MPP Peter Kormos sponsored an anti-scab private member's bill in 2009 as the Vale Inco strike raged. It, too, was voted down.

Web-site login procedure security improved

The Society has completed a project to improve security on the Society web-site. Starting Monday, April 18th, the procedure for using passwords has been encrypted.

Members can now log on knowing that their password is as safe from internet crackers as it can be. There is an important side-effect, however. Usernames and passwords are no longer accessible at the Society web-site. The implications:

- ◆ If you forget your login info, the two Society staff who used to have access to them cannot give them to you over the phone (not a good practice anyway)
- ◆ If you have problems with the web-site, those same two staffers cannot log on using your login info to see if the problem is replicable on their computers; convenient, but also not the best practice

Members who forget their passwords have only one option—using the "forgot your password (FYP)" function on the web-site. The new procedure does not send a password; instead, it sends a link a member can use to register a **new** password.

Members are encouraged to ensure their home e-mail address is added to their personal info on the web-site.

Society Newscast 2011:01

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N.B. Society Newscasts are numbered in accordance with the Society's fiscal year. Newscasts will be numbered 2011 until April 1st, 2012.