



Inter-Church Uranium Committee Educational
Cooperative
Box 7724
Saskatoon, Sask. Canada S7K 4R4
(306) 934-3030

To the Convenor,
Social Justice Committee of The Sask. Conference,
Division of Mission, United Church

A Brief Report of Activities of ICUCEC in 2003-4,
supported in part by donations from SJC

In early 2003 ICUCEC was required to leave its office in St. Paul's Hospital, Old Nurses Residence after a number of years. We believe pressure was brought to bear on the Hospital Administration by the Uranium mining industry in Saskatchewan. The books, publications, files and other resources have been placed in storage until more funds are available to find another place.

A number of activities have been undertaken in the last year. First, the legal action taken by ICUCEC against the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC), that resulted in Judge Campbell, of the Federal Court deciding in ICUCEC's favour (Sept. 23/2002), was appealed by the CNSC in 2003. The mining company COGEMA, the Provincial Government of Saskatchewan and several Aboriginal Companies were co-appellants with the CNSC in the Appeal. Following months of delay the Federal Court of Appeal will hear the Appeal in Calgary on May 3 and 4, 2004. The grounds for the appeal are largely economic hardship and the principle of environmental safety seems to be of secondary consideration. Stefania

Fortugno, our lawyer, has been doing most of the work pro bonum as ICUCEC has only a small budget. She will be assisted at the Appeal by a Toronto Lawyer from the Group Lawyers for Environmental Responsibility who are also unpaid.

A second major activity has been the preparation of multiple briefs by members of ICUCEC about weaknesses in the CNS-Commission Comprehensive Report on the Cluff Lake Decommissioning Project. The Report prepared by the current operating mining company, COGEMA, has many serious weaknesses for Saskatchewan's first de-commissioning of a high-grade uranium mine. It sets a bad precedent for the future de-commissioning of the other high-grade mines. Despite these briefs and a lack of proper public involvement in the evaluation of the report, the CNSC has failed to insist on any changes in the report which was handed to the Minister of the Environment. On April 15, the Environment Minister announced that this report does not require further assessment by a review panel or mediator, under the terms of the Environmental Act. The report was handed back to CNSC leaving all responsibility for the decommissioning to that body. In short, a big whitewash job without proper public input.

A third activity was presenting a brief about the Re-licensing of the Rabbit Lake-A zone mine, where again no attention was paid to the input from ICUCEC by the CNSC. ICUCEC has joined the Canada-wide coalition of at least 34 environmental groups that have set up a Nuclear Waste Watch Committee(NWWC). The aim is to monitor and participate in the Federally-imposed Nuclear Waste Management Organization(NWMO). This is a body set up by the producers of high-level radioactive waste, primarily spent fuel rods, produced in the nuclear plants of Eastern Canada. Questions of disposal through either underground permanent storage, above ground in temporary storage or above ground in a central repository must be decided by 2005. ICUCEC and the coalition are attempting to have the wastes from high-grade uranium mines of Saskatchewan included in the discussions. The first meeting of the NWWC with the NWMO took place in March, 2004.

Briefs have been presented by members of ICUCEC to:

- a) The meeting of the United Church reps. and the Govt. of Saskatchewan.
- b) To the Can. Econet Caucus in Ottawa.
- c) To the Can.Environmental Agency
- d) Several public and high schools.

Briefs are currently being prepared on the following subjects:

- a) The effects on health of miners engaged in the uranium mining industry in Saskatchewan.
- b) An ICUCEC response to the first public hearings on the start-up of the Cigar Lake mine in Northern Sask. If allowed to go ahead it will be the highest-grade uranium mine in the world with potential to produce the greatest pollution of radium-236 to Saskatchewan's northern environment. The first hearings will take place later this year - 2004.
- c) A study of the effects of alpha-radiation and the current international RBE (Relative Biological Efficiency) used to determine its safety for humans and other biota. Alpha-radiation is the principal cause of genetic damage in living organisms exposed to radium contamination.

Members of ICUCEC met with officials of the Radiation Safety Institute in Saskatoon, the agency that is responsible for measuring the various forms of radiation exposure in miners and occupational workers in the Uranium Industry. The purpose was to assess how accurate and how useful alpha-radiation dosimeters really are. They are scientifically accurate but are not being used widely enough.

Donations to ICUCEC have remained very low due to the economic downturn and focus by the public on seemingly more pressing issues. Volunteers continue to give of their time and regular monthly meetings by the Executive Committee provide the direction for activities. ICUCEC is very grateful for donations to support activities, from the churches. It is from the churches that ICUCEC derives moral and ethical as well as financial support.