



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

A Brief Report of Activities of ICUCEC in 2004-5,
supported in part by donations from SJC

The Board has met regularly on a monthly basis in the homes of a board member since losing the office at St. Paul's Hospital. The files and library resources have been placed in storage.

The principal action of the Board has been focussed on the litigation related to the decision of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission to grant Cogema (now called AREVA) a license to proceed with the use of the McClean Lake mill waste pit. In Sept. 2002 Judge Campbell of the Federal Court made a judgement in favour of ICUCEC in its claim that the CNSC had erred in granting a licence. On May 3 and 4th of 2004 the Federal Court of Appeal met in Calgary and listened to the appeal of CNSC /Cogema and co-appellants (Several aboriginal companies and the Sask. Provincial Government) against Judge Campbell's decision. The decision of the Appeal Court rendered later in 2004 was to reverse Judge Campbell's decision.

Following consultation with lawyers from the organization Lawyers for Environmental Responsibility in

Toronto, ICUCEC decided to ask the Supreme Court to give its decision on the matter. Stefania Fortugno, ICUCEC's lawyer prepared the case and submitted an appeal to the Supreme Court in the fall of 2004. In March of 2005 the Supreme Court committee of Judges that decide on whether the Court will accept a case made a decision not to accept our appeal. No reasons are given by the Committee for the decision, as a matter of principle, to avoid further dispute between the parties concerned. This decision has therefore ended our appeal which has taken over five years to pass through the courts. Ms Fortugno has given an enormous amount of her time gratis. ICUCEC has paid some of the other printing and legal costs but has run out of funds to reimburse her further. At this point in time, despite several special appeals the budget of ICUCEC has been reduced to zero. Nevertheless the Board feels that this was an important landmark case that demonstrates the way Governments (Provincial and Federal) and the CNSC and the Courts have aided and abetted the Uranium industry for the short term economic gains and failed to protect the environment and biota from the inevitable long-term consequences of radioactive wastes. Only time will tell who was morally right.

In other matters ICUCEC has long maintained that alpha-radiation has been seriously underestimated as a long-term radioactive agent causing genetic damage to humans and the biota as a result of uranium mining. Maisie Shiell has presented a number of questions at the various hearings held in the last several years as to why the CNSC and industry continually play down its effects when so little scientific evidence is known about its effects in the vicinity of the mines. The CNSC has now released a document CMD-04-M39 about what little is known about alpha-radiation resulting from radioactive uranium mine wastes.

One member of the Board has been participating in the activity of the Nuclear Waste Watch Committee that is monitoring the proceedings of the Nuclear Waste Management Organization that is due to present to the Federal Government later in 2005 a decision about one of three options for disposing high level nuclear waste (principally spent fuel rods from nuclear reactors). Another member of the Board has been participating in the Environmental Caucus of organizations monitoring changes to the Canadian Environmental Act which are leaning to cutting down the length of environmental assessment and seeking public advice only from groups directly affected by the proposed mining companies. Public participation is becoming increasingly limited.

Another member of the Board has been doing a study of

the effect of uranium mining on the health of uranium miners.

Board members have given presentations to Saskatoon High Schools and TV/Radio visitors from Germany, Finland and Sweden. ICUCEC now has an Internet web site which in the coming year will be augmented with new information and linked to other similar sites concerned with uranium mining and nuclear waste.

Because of the declining financial support for ICUCEC from churches and individuals it has been very difficult to do more than concentrate efforts on the Court Case in the last year. ICUCEC is the lone voice from the public that critiques the uranium industry. The latter spends huge amounts of money on advertising propaganda that is not within our means to combat. We seem to be the only organization that has presented briefs at the various hearings concerned with the ongoing functions of the existing mines and the new proposed ones like Cigar Lake, due to come into production within the next two years. Ours is a moral and educational function and without extensive funding it is unlikely we can continue to function much longer. The United Church was one of the key initiators of ICUCEC but it too has quietened its voice and concerns about the uranium industry that continues to pollute northern Saskatchewan and sell uranium to be used in military hardware and bombs and add to the radioactive wastes accumulating from nuclear reactors. Economics and jobs seem sacrosanct for Governments and the public regardless of the moral and environmental problems associated with uranium mining.