



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: MIKE OTTO AND PHIL HEAD

**THE LITTLE PLANET THAT COULDN'T** Now kids will have to just recall 'My Very Educated Mother Just Sent Us Nine ...'

# Pluto left out in the cold

A new classification system has demoted the body to "dwarf planet" status, but some say the debate over the Pluto's place in the heavens is far from over

DEREK LARSON  
News Staff

Pluto, though struck from the league of planets on 24 August by the International Astronomical Union (IAU), may still hold its place in the heavens for many—at least for now.

The IAU voted to reclassify Pluto as a "dwarf planet," a week after the IAU executive committee proposed a new definition of what constitutes a planet, which would have resulted in the addition of three new planets, bringing the total to twelve.

The new definition, the first "official" definition of a planet since the early days of astronomy in ancient Greece, has the clout of being agreed upon internationally by experts in the field.

"[The vote] is a healthy process," says Dr Fred Clark, faculty lecturer for Earth and Atmospheric Sciences and past instructor of a course on the geology of the solar system. "It forces a crystallizing of the debate at some point; otherwise we can dither endlessly."

However, according to Dr Chris Herd, professor of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences at the University of Alberta, the debate surrounding the decision to demote Pluto may not be over yet.

"At this point, it just becomes a

matter of politics in the [IAU]," Herd said.

Meanwhile, Tony Whyte, author of *The Planet Pluto*, suggested that other motives may have triggered the push to oust Pluto.

"It mucks up the beautiful computer simulations to have a bunch of smaller objects suddenly appear," Whyte said. "Maybe it was a plot by some planetary astronomers to demote [Pluto], and then they can ignore [it]."

**"Some of the astronomers [in the IAU] ... can't tell a planet from a Mars bar."**

**TONY WHYTE**  
AUTHOR, *THE PLANET PLUTO*

The new definition of a planet was met with considerable outcry from the public, and left many researchers scratching their heads. Many have questioned the most telling point of the definition, that a planet must "have cleared its orbit" and are now checking to make sure the definition holds up for the remaining eight planets.

"Some of the astronomers [in the

IAU] ...can't tell a planet from a Mars Bar," Whyte said.

That there is a distinct difference between Pluto and the other four outer planets is undisputed—the argument lies primarily with the definition excluding Pluto as a true planet. "I'd say there is a good case for making Pluto an honorary planet," Whyte said.

Herd disagreed, though, and sees Pluto as part of the Kuiper Belt, a wide stretch of objects made up of rocks and ice that sits at the edge of the solar system.

"[Pluto is] a king of the Kuiper Belt, as opposed to an actual planet," he argued.

Herd went on to explain that the classification of Pluto as a non-planet would actually aid in the process of teaching about the formation of the solar system.

"If we realize that Pluto and these other objects [can be grouped] together with the Kuiper Belt objects, then we can start to understand why they're there," Herd explained.

Though our understanding of Pluto's place in the solar system is changing, this argument is far from resolved, and it may be many years before consensus is finally reached and it's decided once and for all where in our solar system Pluto belongs.

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# New 'Plant still work-in-progress

PLANT • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"The guys like me who enjoyed going to the 'Plant for a beer after a lecture on Wednesday afternoon can still go up to RATT. That hasn't changed. We're just offering something different," Cunningham explained.

While excited about the changes to the Powerplant, Cunningham did admit that the plan was still taking off, and that there were a few growing pains to work through.

"With every new project, there are hurdles in the path. But all-in-all, I think things are going smoothly," he said.

Warren Marco, a cook who works at the Powerplant, noted the same. "We were hoping to have this open last month. Unfortunately that wasn't

possible due to construction issues. We don't have a deep-freeze back there, and our ice cream machine isn't working at the moment. But, we're trying, and we're asking for advice from students," Marco said. "[But] I'm quite excited about it. It's a good change."

As for the response among students, it has been fairly positive, although with the caveat that there are still some kinks to be worked out.

"It's kind of sad that they're not going to have bar service there at all. But on the whole, it's nice to see some changes," Sharon O'Hoyan commented after finishing a meal at the buffet on Monday.

"If they got rid of the cabbage rolls, and put better labels and lighting on it, I'd come back, definitely," she added.

## HOURS

**Bar:**  
Thur - Fri 11am-2am  
Sat 8pm-2am

**Leisure space:**  
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**Buffet:**  
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Supper: 4pm-7pm

**Coffee shop:**  
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