

Time to plug in to nuclear power

MENTION THE WORD "RADIATION," AND A number of events come to mind. Deformities among Ukrainian children resulting from the Chernobyl accident, fallout from the Castle Bravo test, and the horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are all still burned into the public consciousness.

It's interesting, then, that a poll released Friday by Environics Research Group shows that a slim majority of Albertans surveyed are in favour of the construction of a nuclear power plant in Alberta. More tellingly, 25 per cent of respondents are strongly opposed, while only 20 per cent are strongly supportive. It's clear, then, that public opinion is anything but.

This is understandable given the nature of nuclear technology. Misinformation abounds, and for one to comprehend what's happening inside a nuclear reactor, some degree of applied postsecondary education is necessary. Not many Albertans even know what an alpha particle or gamma ray is, leading to a vast disparity in the understanding between engineering specialists and the lay person.

This slim majority—and other popular movements—show that, as a society, we're ready to start moving away from the dirty technologies of the 20th century and on to something better. The reactor systems designed by Atomic Energy of Canada—the CANDU reactor—have an inherently safe design and a track record to prove it.

The Canadian public knows this—60 per cent of the Environics respondents are very concerned about nuclear waste, while only 44 per cent are very concerned about the possibility of an accident. Not only is this disparity indicative of the greater public trust of atomic energy, but more importantly, the valid fear of nuclear waste.

A nuclear power plant such as the one proposed for Peace River would have a generation capacity of 2200 MegaWatts, enough to replace Alberta's largest coal-fired power plant. It wouldn't burn over a thousand tonnes of coal per hour, nor would it disperse the resulting carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxides, and mercury into the atmosphere.

What it would do, however, is produce large quantities of radioactive waste, to be disposed of in a location somewhere in the Canadian Shield. The plan calls for containers of waste to be buried in rock that's probably going to be stable for the length of time required for the waste to become safe. Probably.

Nuclear power is trading one sort of pollution for another. Given that uranium, like oil, coal, and natural gas, is a non-renewable resource, this is a stopgap measure at best. But considering the current risks posed by climate change, this nuclear-plant proposal is a necessity for the province.

People have started buying hybrid cars in an attempt to reduce their environmental impact, and it seems now that they're buying into the notion of nuclear energy too. It's not a permanent sustainable solution, but at this point, every little bit will help. Let's just hope that the big fusion breakthrough comes soon.

MIKE OTTO
Photo Editor

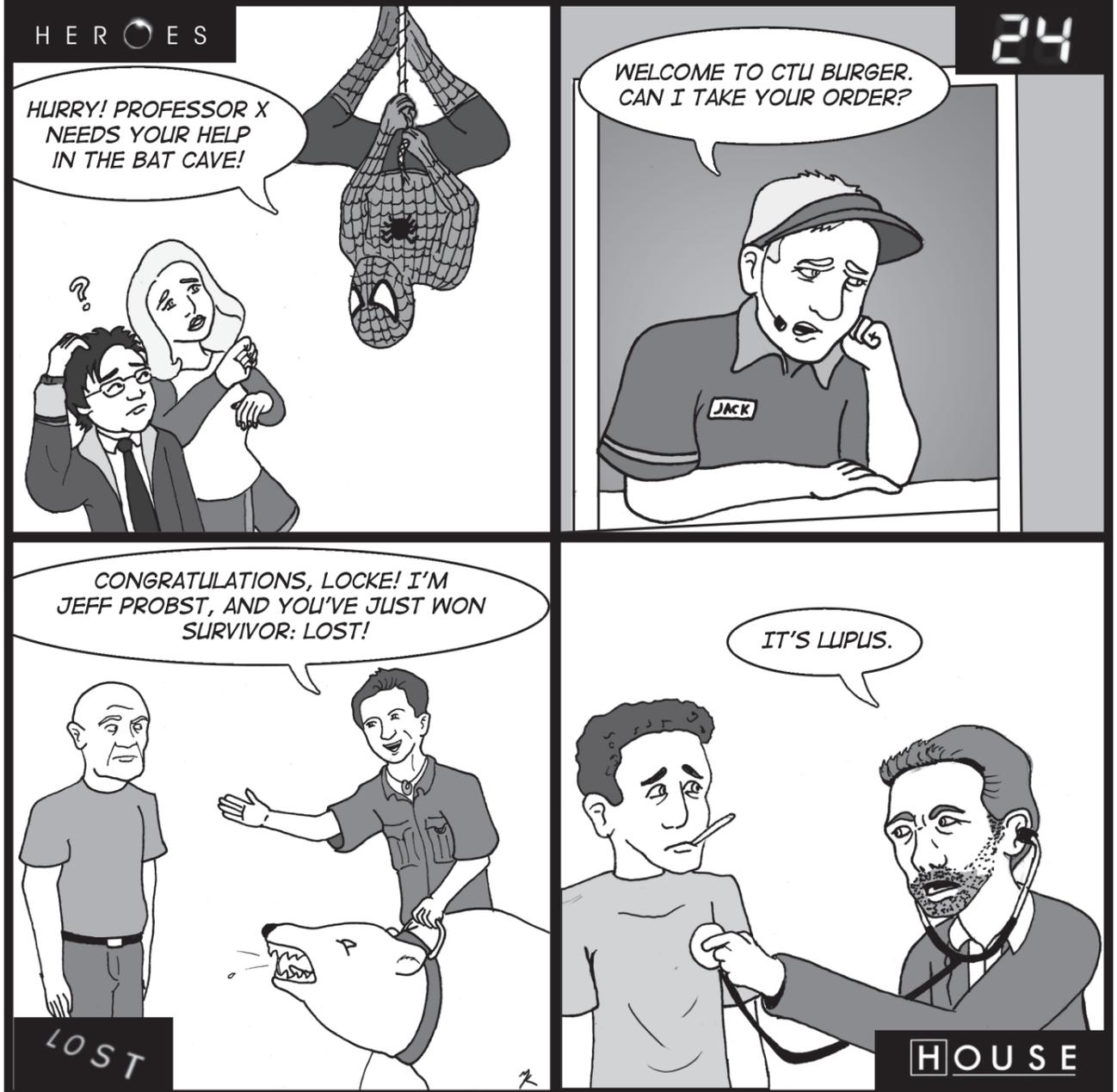
Great Oil of China

PETROCHINA, THE STATE-OWNED OIL COMPANY, has become the world's first trillion-dollar corporation. The company nearly tripled in value—and soared past the previous record-setter Exxon Mobil, which is worth US\$488 billion—after it floated two per cent of its stock on the Shanghai stock exchange and reached the one trillion mark on Monday.

PetroChina has traded on Wall Street for years, but Chinese citizens are unable to invest directly in international markets. The price spike is regarded as anomalous by experts—based on stock demand rather than PetroChina's real worth—but it's a potent reminder of the power of China's economy, and its growing middle class.

ROBIN COLLUM
Sports Editor

In anticipation of the Writer's Guild strike, networks have started planning alternate season endings with the assistance of freelance screenwriters



LETTERS

University putting a freeze on green initiatives

I live in East Campus Village and as such, am a tenant of our fair University. Recently, our fridge crapped out, and we needed a replacement. In a shocking display of competence, we received a brand new refrigerator within an acceptable timeframe. Unfortunately, upon looking at the Energuide label that came attached with it, I was dismayed to find that it was one of the least efficient models available for purchase.

This made me wonder how many new appliances must the University purchase every year for its residences. In Lister alone, how many appliances are currently being used and subsequently replaced? Assuming all the U's purchasing decisions have followed a similar cheap-ass format, it amounts to a substantial amount of hardware that's grossly inefficient and does nothing but consume vast amounts of power for marginal benefit.

If the University is truly dedicated to improving its impact on the environment, perhaps one thing they could do is re-evaluate their purchasing decisions.

The aggregate power consumption of all those gluttonous gigaWatt-gorging units is probably quite substantial, and a net benefit could be had if the University were

to spend the extra \$100 per unit and buy more efficient models.

It's a shame that sensible spending isn't as headline grabbing as a new multi-million dollar recycling facility.

MATTHEW CADRIN
Economics II

Strike means Jack didn't trip over the apathy stick

I disagree with Paul Owen's claim that Quebec postsecondary students have no reason to complain in "Strike won't do Jacques" (30 October).

Sure they have the lowest tuition in the country, but it isn't a massive coincidence. They achieved that precisely by being militant and noisy, and continuing to be so is what's going to keep their tuition the lowest.

The only reason Mr Owen is likely correct in claiming that we'll never have free tuition is because the rest of us are so complacent in accepting our ever-rising tuition. If, due to its students, one of the least wealthy provinces can have an average tuition less than half that in one of the most wealthy provinces, maybe we could have free tuition across Canada if we followed the example set by Quebec students.

ADAM FERLAND
Science V

Remember those poppies

Every year around this time, students begin to show a collective sigh of relief. The pressure of exams and term papers has begun to take its toll, and we're all looking forward to a very much deserved break on the Remembrance Day long weekend. The part that dumbfounds me, though, is why more students don't pay the honourable tribute to the soldiers past that make this day possible. Every year when I walk around campus during November, I can't help but notice the lack of poppies being worn.

If you have some ideological argument against war, I respect this. But this isn't about whether or not one supports war. This is about setting a good example and doing the right thing.

For those on campus who enjoy making fun of the conservative red-neck Albertans and who think that by being on campus they're superior to this group of people, I challenge you to this: try to bring yourself to a level equal to these people. A lot more of them wear poppies than the campus community. Take some of the \$40 you are going to spend on highballs and cover during your long weekend, and put it into the poppy box. And this problem isn't just among students—it's rampant among faculty too.

Shame on you, University of Alberta students and professors.

JOSHUA WASYLICW
Arts IV

My couch can drive to the fridge—top that, lady

I feel that I must heartily disagree with Lisa Amerongen's claim that no one cared about the theft of my motorized couch (re: "Couch-jackers make off with driveable comfort," 1 November).

Seeing how Facebook is popular among young people nowadays, let's use it to gauge caring. As of 2 November, after the couch had been found and many members left, the group for returning the couch had gained 437 members in less than a week. Both Lister Hall and the Petition to incorporate Bearscat into Beartracks have only 200 more members.

But more importantly, which groups does it have more than? It has 107 more members than the group supporting the U-Pass, 323 more than Public Interest Alberta, and a whopping 380 more than the Arts Faculty Association. This shows that yes, there are people on this campus that do care. In fact, it was the enthusiastic response of this group that actually led to the return of the couch.

What I find truly disturbing is that someone would feel strongly enough about this issue to write a letter to the editor claiming that they don't care about theft in the campus area. In nearly every Campus Crime Beat, when not reading about creepers in HUB, I read about a theft somewhere on campus.

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