

Marmora gives

Dr. Wahl go-ahead

Letter

The dangers of nuclear waste

To the Editor:

I was shocked to read in the January 11 edition of the Marmora Herald that the Marmora area was being considered for a nuclear dump site and that the Village Council would "enthusiastically receive", or even consider, the proposal. Few people know of the threatening implications such a project would involve and little realize the potential danger of a nuclear dump site in our area.

The disposal of nuclear waste poses a serious threat to the physical safety of the environment and also to the citizens of the Marmora area since there has been no means of safely storing nuclear waste demonstrated as of yet. Nuclear waste is composed of the most dangerous substance in existence, highly radioactive plutonium. The problem is in isolating this radioactive waste material from the general environment.

In last week's Herald, Dr. George Wahl was quoted as saying that "There is one site and possibly two that may satisfy necessary conditions...where everything is neutralized." Factually, no land remains constant indefinitely so underground burial of the waste would be a potential danger. A change in land form in our area could cause a leakage of radioactive waste which would eventually find its way through the watershed. These wastes remain lethal for thousands of years. Last year, when the Madoc area was being considered for a disposal site, it was estimated that the land would have to remain stable for half a million years before the threat of radiation would diminish. Is this the type of environment we wish to live in?

The Federal Government's own study for possible sites to store radioactive wastes did not identify the Marmora areas as a potential site but rather the Mount Moriah area near Cooper. It was surprising to read

that Dr. Wahl could suggest Marmora had an appropriately "neutralized" area suitable for a dump site when not even experts in the field can guarantee the safety of any location for the disposal of nuclear wastes.

Storage of waste in containers on the site would also create safety hazards since any accident, no matter how slight, would release radioactive particles into the environment.

A nuclear disposal site in the Marmora area would pose many frightening risks to the health of our citizens. The slightest accident would release radioactive material and cause contamination resulting in pollution, sickness, and even death. Employees of such an industry would also run the risk of becoming contaminated themselves and then, in turn, passing it on to their families. I, for one, do not believe that any industry is worth the threat to personal health and safety.

When a similar situation arose in the Madoc area last year, residents flatly rejected such a proposal, realizing its potential danger to themselves and to future generations. We, as citizens of Marmora, should be no less concerned with the safety of our own community and should do everything within our power to stop any progress made towards the establishment of a nuclear dump site in our area.

In an attempt to make the public aware of the dangers of a nuclear dump site, I have only briefly outlined the hazardous effects it would provoke. I feel the safety of ourselves and of future generations heavily outweighs any "benefits" this industry might offer and I firmly believe that Marmora should oppose the construction of a nuclear dump site and the dangers it creates.

Lori Maynes
Centre Hastings Student

Marmora Village Council has given its approval to Dr. George Wahl of Thurlow to go ahead with an investigation of possible nuclear dumping sites in the Marmora vicinity.

After meeting with Dr. Wahl, a noted geologist and metallurgist who helped set up the Marmoraton mine for Bethlehem Steel in the early fifties, council passed a motion moved by Councillor Ralph Neal and seconded by deputy reeve Kenneth Trumble that read:

"Resolved that council is in favour of having Dr. George Wahl investigate, at no expense to the village, the possibility of establishing a nuclear disposal site in the area."

Dr. Wahl had contacted council through clerk-treasurer William Shannon the previous week after learning of the impending closing of the Marmoraton Mine.

According to Mr. Shannon, Dr. Wahl wants "authorization from the council as a means of official recognition. He pointed out that such a site would not be within the jurisdiction of the village and so ultimately they would be exercising no control.

According to Mr. Shannon, Dr. Wahl's investigation may eventually lead him to presenting a brief before the Atomic Energy Commission.

Mr. Shannon also indicated that some approach on the subject has also been made to County Council and to Clark Rollins.

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Township Council Takes

"Neutral" Nuclear Position;

CORP Not Satisfied

Marmora and Lake Townships Council have passed a motion saying that they will not "work towards establishing a nuclear disposal site" in the municipality.

The motion, which passed with the support of councillors Empey and Golden and Deputy-Reeve John Wilkes, came at the urging of representatives from Marmora and District CORP II, an anti-nuclear group that had previously presented the council with a petition containing 1300 signatures from the townships and the Village of Marmora.

Rob Taylor, President of CORP II asked that council give a reply to a letter presented earlier by CORP which asked that the council take a clear decision on the issue; Mr. Taylor indicated that CORP did not want council to take a "no position stance" but that it state clearly whether it was for or against the placement of a nuclear waste disposal site in the area.

When council has passed the motion, Mr. Taylor indicated that this was such a "no position stance" since it did not place the council squarely on one side or the other in the nuclear debate, and as such, CORP was unhappy with the result.

In reply to this councillor Empey said that "I don't think we're prepared to go that far. We won't encourage the development of a nuclear site, but I don't think we're prepared to form special activities to oppose it." Deputy Reeve Wilkes and Reeve Bell echoed these ideas.

Councillor Ted Bonter opposed the motion and was quite vocal in his opposition to closing the doors of the investigation. "I think that it is premature of CORP to come here and ask us to pass such a motion; I resent the fact that CORP comes here proposing to know all the answers, when the scientists are just now endeavoring to find out what the answers are. I won't be dictated to by a petition."

Mr. Bonter also reacted strongly to suggestions by the CORP representatives that councils failure to take a no nuclear stance might become an issue in the next election. "I think it would be really sad if you form, as the sole qualifying factor, whether someone is a member of pro-nuclear or anti-nuclear faction".

Mr. Bonter also stated that he felt that Marmora might eventually be sorry for its actions of closing the door prematurely if the nuclear investigations eventually proved it was perfectly safe. He felt that a nuclear disposal site could offer prosperity to an area and pointed out that some "fifty to seventy" municipalities had petitioned the AECL for a disposal site. Other council members expressed surprise at this statement. It was pointed out that substantial opposition had developed in the Thunder Bay area and in Renfrew County where a public campaign had forced the council to withdraw its support of the idea.

Mr. Bonter said that he was among the PHLIC delegation that went to Ottawa to talk to AECL officials. Although Marmora and Lake is not officially a member of PHLIC and has never paid the \$100 membership fee (PHLIC is now asking for a further \$200), members of council, including Mr. Bonter are free to and have attended its meetings as observers.

As the CORP delegation was preparing to leave, they were questioned by council as to their funding. Mr. Taylor said that they were funded entirely out of their pockets and contributions from individuals. He said that no government money had been received by CORP.

At the close of the meeting, Mr. Bonter read to council the motion, which has been distributed by PHLIC to all member municipalities, petitioning the government to drop the ban on AECL field investigations. Council did not consider or discuss the motion due to the earlier motion.

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