

# Editorial

## Unsafe N Reactor should be shut down

Controversy is heating up in Congress over the status of Hanford's N Reactor, a 23-year-old nuclear facility used to produce about a third of the nation's weapons-grade plutonium. The debate is between those who want to permanently shut down the reactor, which has been closed since January for repairs, and those who assert that its renewed operation is vital to national security interests.

Those arguing that the N Reactor should be allowed to resume operation, however, have failed to consider two salient points: 1) Safety violations have plagued operations at Hanford and 2) alternative sources of plutonium can be used to satisfy demand.

According to a report published in The Oregonian last Thursday, a congressional draft released Oct. 20 cited practices by the U.S. Department of Energy, including the unsafe operating conditions of Hanford's N Reactor. The report included the following safety problems:

- Some workers have been exposed unnecessarily to radiation and to extreme hazards.
- Some inspectors who checked the N Reactor for safety violations were not certified for the job.
- The Energy Department ignored a policy of minimizing worker exposure to radiation in order to increase production of weapons-grade plutonium at Hanford.

Furthermore, a report by the National Academy of Sciences that reviewed the hydrogen mitigation system at the N Reactor states that plans for preventing a hydrogen buildup may be improperly based on conservative accident scenarios.

Regardless of whether or not shutting down Hanford's N Reactor would affect national security interests, the reactor should be shut down permanently if the Department of Energy's Hanford operations continue to neglect safety problems and environmental affects.

Evidence, however, shows that the strategic plutonium reserves that proponents of restarting the N Reactor are concerned with could be attained by other means.

A second recent study, for example, conducted by Senator Mark Hatfield's staff and also reported in The Oregonian, showed Hanford's N Reactor could be retired without hampering the defense capacity of the U.S.

Hatfield's report asserted correctly that recycled plutonium from obsolete weapons and plutonium recovered from waste products could be substituted for the amount of plutonium otherwise produced at the Hanford reactor.

Because operations at Hanford's N Reactor violated safety procedures and because plutonium could be attained by other means, Hanford's N Reactor should be shut down permanently.

If, however, the future supply of weapons-grade plutonium becomes inadequate to ensure national security, the Congress should approve the Energy Department's request to construct a modern, safer nuclear reactor in a location where environmental concerns are less immediate than at Hanford's site.

The construction of a new reactor also would placate those who oppose shutting down Hanford's N Reactor because such action would displace workers. Hanford's employees could be transferred to the new plant, where safer conditions hopefully would exist.

But whether or not a new reactor is built, the unsafe N Reactor at Hanford should be not be permitted to resume operating.



## Letters

### Duck spirit

I was a graduate student at the University from 1982-85. My three years in Eugene were easily the most enjoyable of my life.

Rooting for the Ducks in football during those years was very much a bittersweet experience. We had a whammy on Arizona, tied the Irish, and clobbered OSU. But lost to UOP one year, too.

Now that I'm at UCLA, Oregon once again has a super team. On Saturday, I went to the Rose Bowl, sat in the Bruin student section, and hoped as hard as I could for an Oregon victory.

Alas, it wasn't to be. Heat, smog and fumbles doomed the Ducks. But the game was not lost through lack of effort, and that is what makes Oregon teams so special. Often outmanned, frequently out-scored, but never short on spirit.

It was really great of the University to send the band down with the team. What a Herculean undertaking this must have been, but what a wonderful show of support for such a major game.

Seeing that band march into the Rose Bowl made me so

proud. And that band, on an otherwise miserable day, honored the University. Thanking them is the real reason behind this letter.

And just maybe the Bruins will slip a little. It might be a bit far-fetched, but if Cal can rise to the occasion, and SC return to its old form on the last Saturday of the season, maybe, just maybe, the Ducks and the band will be back to Pasadena come New Years Day.

Robert Hanks  
Santa Monica, Calif.

### Fight hunger

We would like to express our gratitude to the Oregon Daily Emerald for recognizing the serious hunger problem in the state of Oregon (ODE, Oct. 21). The problem of hunger is a serious one, and the number of Oregonians requesting emergency food assistance is increasing.

The Oregon Student Public Interest Research Group (OSPIRG) on campus is working to combat hunger on both the local and international level. As part of "World Food Focus," we sponsored a teleconference to educate people to the problem of world hunger.

Currently, OPSIRG's Campaign Against Hunger group is gearing up for Oxfam's Fast For A World Harvest and a Break Fast dinner on November 19. This event will give people the chance to fast, for a meal or a

day, and donate their food money to Oxfam's programs to alleviate hunger in needy areas.

We urge people to get involved in working against hunger. If you would like to help organize the Fast For A World Harvest or participate in the fast itself, call us at OSPIRG, 686-4377, or stop by EMU Suite 1.

Janet Walters  
Pat McAuliffe  
OSPIRG Campaign Against Hunger

### Distractions

While listening to the lecture by former Senator Gaylord Nelson on Tuesday, Oct. 20, I was reminded of an annoying act common at such events. A photographer, presumably from the Emerald, moved about the room taking numerous photographs of the speaker.

The body movement and click of the shutter are very distracting. I realize that a nice picture of the speaker gesturing with his or her hand dresses up an article a bit, but it doesn't seem that it should take twenty or thirty tries to get that one photo.

The photographer at the Nelson lecture took at least that many. I write this in the hope that photographers from the Emerald and elsewhere will make themselves a little less obtrusive.

Glenn Thackray  
Student

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The Emerald will attempt to print all letters containing fair comment on topics of interest to the University community.

Letters to the editor must be limited to 250 words, typed, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is turned in. The Emerald reserves the right to edit any letter for length or style. Letters to the editor should be turned into the Emerald office, Suite 300, EMU.