

Federal study declares VDTs safe for all

by Canadian Press
OTTAWA — The federal Health Department says tests it conducted on video-display terminals show there is absolutely no danger posed by the minuscule amounts of radiation emitted by the machines.

"There is, no reason for any person, male or female, young or old, pregnant or not, to be concerned about radiation health effects from VDTs," said a report released Friday by Health Minister Monique Bégin.

"Radiation emissions from VDTs are either nonexistent or are so low that no standard in the world would classify these emissions as hazardous."

The report contained information on tests on 122 types of VDTs and 227 individual units. The tests measured emissions along every length of the electromagnetic spectrum from extremely-low-frequency emissions through x-rays.

Begin herself said the findings are consistent with those from other tests done by reputable scientists around the world.

"This consensus leads to the unequivocal conclusion that video-display terminals do not emit unacceptable levels of radiation," she said in a news release.

"I want to assure all VDT operators that they are not exposed to a radiation health hazard."

None of the tests conducted by experts at the Health Department's radiation protection bureau dealt with other health problems that have been linked to VDTs — problems such as cataracts, eye strain or pain in the back, shoulders and neck.

However, the department believes these complaints are probably caused by the type of work done by VDT operators rather than the machines themselves.

VDTs are widely used in newsrooms, airline ticket offices and financial institutions and are an integral part of word processors that have become popular in many offices. Estimates of the number of terminals in use in Canada range from about 160,000 to more than 250,000.

Among the findings in the report:

- No x-ray emissions were detected in any of the tests. Of the total number of models tested, 48 tests were done in a special facility that can detect low-energy x-rays half a million times lower than the government's standard for emissions.

- VDTs have no components that generate microwaves, the type of radiation used in microwave ovens or radar and the type that has the potential to harm humans by heating up body tissues. No microwaves were found in any of the tests.

- Ultraviolet and infrared emissions were either nondetectable or some 10,000 times below the limits for on-the-job exposure.

- Small amounts of extremely-low-frequency emissions were found, roughly comparable to the amounts from fluorescent lights or hair dryers and far less than the amounts found in baseboard heaters or electric hand mixers.

POLITICAL PRISONERS

Latin refugees admitted.

OTTAWA (CP) — The federal government has decided to open Canada's borders to as many as 300 former political prisoners in El Salvador and their families, Immigration Minister Lloyd Axworthy announced Friday.

"Due to lack of stability in the area, there is concern for the safety of these Salvadoran refugees," Axworthy said in a statement.

"Every effort will be made to help those who want to leave the country as soon as possible."

Canada will accept about 300 of the 500 political prisoners recently released under an amnesty proclamation by the Salvadoran government.

Fleet Street loves Disco Dick's strange toast

by E. KAYE FULTON
Southam News

CHARLO, N.B. — The unrelenting British media turned their attention from royalty last weekend to pursue a new quarry — Premier Richard Hatfield and his "flame of love."

Cornered at the Charlottetown airport minutes before the arrival of Prince Charles and Diana on Saturday, the flamboyant New Brunswick premier was peppered with questions about his unorthodox toast to the couple at a provincial dinner the night before.

He nervously rebuffed suggestions — particularly from the blunt Fleet Street media — that he had been drunk at the dinner.

"I was very, very proud about the whole evening," he said. "I've worked long and hard. I thought it was exciting. The dinner was

impeccably good; the lamb was perfect."

The Fleet Street crowd had a field day when Hatfield left Prince Charles "speechless" with an emotional tribute Friday that included a statement that "we have heard and read the lies . . . today it was wonderful to meet and know the truth."

In the same bewildering speech, Hatfield — reminiscent of Margaret Trudeau's "song of love" ditty in Venezuela — urged the audience to rise "in a toast of love."

To top it off, Hatfield broke royal protocol by excusing his guests from the main table and then calling them back for the blessing.

"I just forgot," he told reporters, "I make mistakes once in a while."

Acting like a fox among hounds, Hatfield defended his toast and said the royal couple "understands" what he meant.

"I'm surprised that people don't know what love is," he told reporters. "Or what lies are, especially English-speaking people."

Hatfield said his reference to "lies" was aimed at "so much which has been said, written or published which is wrong" about Britain's greatest tourist attractions.

Asked how much sleep he had before the visit, Hatfield said "a little." In fact, the Premier has worked solidly for three weeks to prepare for the arrival of Prince Charles and Diana in New Brunswick.

"The Premier is crazy about the Royal Family," said a New Brunswick aide along on the tour. "He was the only premier invited to the Royal wedding and he's nuts about Charles and Diana. The last thing he'd want is to insult them."

A British journalist also asked Hatfield what

kind of wine was served at the lavish dinner, and how much of it he had consumed.

"It was Inniskillin wine from Ontario and I don't measure what I drink," replied Hatfield coldly. "Just what are you suggesting?"

"I think the suggestion, sir, is that you had too much to drink," said James Whitaker, a "royal-watcher" for the London Daily Mirror.

Hatfield staunchly denied it.

Although Whitaker later commended the premier for "doing well. It was tough for him, bloody tough," that didn't stop his colleagues from filing stories back home about "New Brunswick's eccentric Premier . . . nicknamed Disco Dick."

It also didn't stop them from asking Canadian reporters for interesting tidbits about the next premier on the tour — Ontario's William Davis.

FOR ROYAL VISIT

Peace demonstrators move

OTTAWA (CP) — Anti-cruise missile demonstrators reached a compromise with the federal government Friday and agreed to shift their peace camp to another part of Parliament Hill in advance of the visit today by the Prince and Princess of Wales.

The move followed harsh criticism earlier in the day by interim Opposition Leader Erik Nielsen, who demanded the government remove the "eyesores" and "rubbish" set up more than two months ago by the protesters.

"I don't think it lends to the dignity and to the grace of the reception to which they (Prince Charles and Diana) are entitled," Nielsen told reporters after raising the matter in the Commons.

Group member Andy Moxley said the camp's torn and battered sign will be moved late Sunday to the northeast part of the Parliament Hill lawn.

The demonstrators have been camped at the foot of the Hill since April, keeping vigil under a rainbow-colored sign. Moxley said the table now covered with literature on the peace movement and equipment such as sleeping bags will be removed.

"We feel Mr. Nielsen is using his position in the House of Commons to criticize us and is using a medium in which we have no method of reply," Moxley said. He said the group will continue to keep a 24-hour vigil until at least September.

There is still no agreement with the government over what will happen during the Canada Day celebrations on July 1 when Parliament Hill is generally packed with tourists. Moxley said any sleeping on the Hill will be restricted to after dark so as not to "offend the tourists' eye."

The group had earlier been ordered off the Hill by an official of the secretary of state but the deadline was ignored and negotiations between the two sides were arranged.

Secretary of State Serge Joyal defended the campers in the House earlier Friday. "They have a right to come here and express their opinion, even though their opinions might be questioned by some other people," Joyal said.

The group has said it will leave when the government refuses to test the U.S. cruise missile in Canada or agrees to a free Commons vote on the issue.

Village saved from fire

NEMASKA, Que. (CP) — A forest fire that has been threatening this Cree Indian village since last Wednesday was under control this morning, but firefighters remained leary about allowing the 275 evacuated residents to return.

"With persistent heat and wind, it could be a different picture later today," said forest fire inspector Maurice St. Pierre, recalling how the blaze slipped out of control Sunday afternoon.

Nemaska, a newly-built village amidst the James Bay hydroelectric development in northern Quebec, was evacuated Friday when flames were only two kilometres away.

Women and children were taken by helicopter to Nemiscau, a camp for Hydro-Quebec power line workers 30 kilometres away, while male residents took boats across Lake Champion to join them.

Gregoire planning to appeal

QUEBEC (CP) — National assembly member Gilles Gregoire indicated Friday he would appeal his conviction on seven counts of committing immoral acts with minor girls and refused a request by Premier René Lévesque to resign.

Judge André Sirois of juvenile court handed down a 35-page verdict Friday that rejected Gregoire's testimony as "weak" and "unreasonable."

Gregoire, one of the founders of the Parti Québécois, was not in court for the decision and could not be reached for comment. He will be sentenced July 14.

Lévesque asked soon after the judgment was handed down that Gregoire resign but a statement from the premier's office said Gregoire did not want to quit until he has exhausted appeal procedures.

Lévesque said Gregoire's status would be discussed by the PQ caucus "as soon as possible" but did not say whether he would insist on Gregoire's resignation, which is not mandatory because he was not charged under the Criminal Code of Canada.

Financial difficulties will close C-Channel

TORONTO (CP) — C-Channel, the national pay TV company that called itself the lively arts network, was placed in receivership Friday after running up about \$11 million in debt during its 18 weeks on the air.

President Ed Cowan told a news conference he still hoped the network could be preserved and was proud of what had been achieved so far.

"Who knows? There may be a way through all of this," he said.

However, Larry Ward, sitting next to him as the representative of receiver Price-Waterhouse Ltd., said programming would continue until June 30 but was not likely after that.

C-Channel, which offered a mixture of "classic" movies, opera and symphony concerts and children's shows, had managed to attract only 27,000 subscribers, 25 per cent of its goal, Cowan said.

Despite the poor showing, Cowan said the network is "extremely proud" that it was able to "do what we set out to do on television."

Many of C-Channel's 45 employees, out of work June 30, gathered quietly a few metres from the news conference in the network's high-rise suite, then gradually moved closer to listen to Cowan answer reporters' questions.

Cowan steadfastly refused to answer questions about why and how the network had failed.

"I'm not prepared to lay the blame at anything or on anybody's doorstep," Cowan said, adding that he needed a couple of weeks to think things over.

The network had an "accumulation of problems" and the inevitability of receivership became "abundantly clear" about 10 days ago, he said.

C-Channel had signed up about 17,000 subscribers when it went on the air Feb. 1 and research a couple of years before indicated the network's formula would be successful.

"If all things had been equal, it might have worked," Cowan said, declining to elaborate.

The network's financial troubles had been rumored for weeks, having come to light in May when Cowan announced it was for sale.

In mid-May, the network made an unsuccessful bid for 25,000 new subscribers with a weekend of free programming supported by celebrity guest hosts.

The "survivalathon" managed to attract about 4,500 new subscribers, but cable companies didn't get around to installing equipment for many and some others backed out, Cowan said Friday.

Cowan said he suspects the entire Canadian pay-TV industry is "not without problems right across the board" from regulatory restrictions to consumer difficulties.

"I have a feeling everyone involved in pay TV are having a very, very, very close close look," at programming and what the consumer wants.

Asked why C-Channel failed while other pay-TV channels appeared successful, Cowan replied: "That remains to be seen, eh?"

But as Cowan was speaking to reporters, competitor Superchannel Ontario was sending out a release that boasted of 80,000 subscribers, "posting the strongest sales of any network in Ontario in the last two months."

PQ tries to end streak

MONTREAL (CP) — The Parti Québécois will try to break a seven-year record of no wins in provincial byelections today as voters head to the polls in three ridings.

More than 105,000 Quebecers are eligible to vote in Saguenay, Montreal-St. Jacques and the suburban Quebec City riding of Charlesbourg.

Ruling parties in Quebec used to come up winners in byelections. But the PQ has lost all 13 byelections it has called in nearly seven years in office.

The party still holds a comfortable 75 seats out of 122 seats in the national assembly, compared with 43 for the Liberals and one member who is an independent.

But the PQ has geared up its campaign in recent days, drawing on the popularity of Premier René Lévesque to counter the effects of a year filled with soured relations between government and labor, growing discontent over the provincial economy and high unemployment, and a series of mini-scandals.

Lévesque has already campaigned three times in St. Jacques, a mostly working-class, French-speaking riding in east Montreal, a PQ stronghold represented since 1970 by Claude Charron, former government house leader.

Charron resigned the seat after convictions for shoplifting and impaired driving in 1982.

PQ candidate Jeannine Cheron, an active riding worker under Charron, is favored to take a narrow lead over Liberal Serge Champagne, a 39-year-old lawyer.

Lévesque was active on the campaign trail during the weekend, taunting hecklers and urging PQ supporters at a rally in Saguenay, where the party has also been strong since 1970.

In the riding — left empty by the resignation of Lucien Lessard, fish and game minister — it appears a split vote between Liberal Ghislain Maltais and independent Pierre Maltais (no relation) could help PQ hopeful Johanne Isabel squeak through.

In Charlesbourg, civil servants hit by government wage rollbacks are expected to give Marc-Yvan Côté, former national assembly member, a win for the Liberals.

FAMOUS PLAYERS

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