

GAINSAYER

NEWSLETTER for GEORGIANS AGAINST NUCLEAR ENERGY

SPRING 1991

The Renewable Revolution



Every bit of news from the Persian Gulf over the past half year had advocates of renewable energies saying, "I told you so." For years, they've been telling the world that dependence on fossil fuels is dangerous; now the war in the Gulf (whether or not it was entirely about oil) has provided the ultimate proof. As if we needed any more proof after the last few years of alarming news about global warming.

Conventional wisdom sees the history of renewable energy this way: There was, at one time, a big push in research and development springing from the oil shock of the early 1970s and sustained through the Carter era with initiatives like tax credits for solar power. Then the Reagan team removed the solar panels from the White House and dismantled federal support for renewable energies. Without the subsidies, solar, wind, and water power sank back into oblivion.

The story is more or less accurate up to that last point. Renewable energy development did *not* quietly roll over and die in the early 1980s. Rather, it retreated from the center of public policy into the hands of a few visionary politicians, executives, committed tinkerers, and small businesses. For the past

10 years, these people have been constructing, testing, and refining equipment that generates power using everything from solar panels and windmills to cow manure and wood chips. Forced to fend for themselves without government subsidies, producers and users had to make sure their gadgets achieved the maximum energy bang for their very limited bucks. The result is an array of new renewable energy technologies that are not only ready for large-scale application but are actually in use to an extent few in government, the corporate world, or the media have so far acknowledged.

California's wind and solar energy plants remain the most widely known and publicized. But those giant generating facilities are just one facet of the ongoing renewable

energy revolution. Other technologies — passive solar architecture, hydro power, and biomass (wood fuel) — supply more than 20 percent of the world's energy right now. Even in the oil-guzzling U.S., renewable energy provides between 11 and 12 percent of the nation's total primary energy, about twice as much as nuclear power, according to Amory Lovins of the Rocky Mountain Institute, who summarizes his impressive ideas on energy in the foreword to the *Real Goods Alternative Energy Sourcebook 1990* (1989 Real Goods Trading Co., 966 Mazzoni St., Ukiah, CA 95482.)

Karen Perez of Home Power magazine says, "People are always talking about how wonderful it will be when these things work in the future. We're not talking about the future. This is for now."

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Energy Plan or Energy Sham?

On the campaign trail he promised to be "the environmental president." Yet in the National Energy Strategy President George Bush released in February, he seems to have favored only the financial environment for his friends in the oil, auto and nuclear industries.

Rep. Barbara Boxer (D-CA) calls it "a back-to-the-'50s energy policy." The Union of Concerned Scientists calls it "a national energy tragedy." And Sierra Club President Susan Merrow simply calls it "scandalous."

After reviewing 22,000 pages of written comments and documents from Americans and American organizations, White House brass like Chief of Staff John Sununu were allowed to shoot down any progressive or thoughtful long-term energy strategies.

The policy that was finally adopted includes weakening the licensing procedures

for new nuclear power plants — procedures originally enacted in response to the abuses and safety lapses perpetrated by local power companies and their contractors. The new "strategy" would cut out some of the public hearings necessary before a license is granted, and cut states out of the approval process when the Feds select sites for nuclear waste storage.

The administration also refused to raise automobile fuel efficiency standards "without more study," despite evidence that substantial mileage increases are technically possible.

Another facet of Bush's plan that has met considerable opposition is the opening of the ecologically-sensitive National Wildlife Refuge in northern Alaska to oil drilling. Although actual access to substantial oil

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U.S. Stymies World Peace Effort

While the nation's attention was focused on the outbreak of war in the Persian Gulf, an historic milestone in the quest for world peace was being tragically ignored. At the UN a two-week conference convened to consider an amendment to the Limited Test Ban Treaty that would end nuclear testing for all time.

The original treaty, signed by Kennedy and Khrushchev in 1963 after the Cuban Missile Crisis, prohibited test explosions of atomic weapons in the atmosphere, outer space, and underwater. It allowed underground testing with the understanding that it, too, would end shortly, and pledged the undersigned parties to work towards that goal. In all, 188 nations are signatories to the treaty. One of them happens to be Iraq.

Of all the nations attending the recent UN conference, only the United States and the United Kingdom were in favor of continued testing. That Britain should side with the U.S. came as no great surprise; in addition to sharing some of our technologies with each other, we even let them test their bombs in our desert. On the testing question it appears that only two sentiments exist: that of the world on the one hand, and the United States on the other.

The situation might be compared to an alcoholic relative who refuses to admit he has a drinking problem. This country has an addiction to the building and testing of nuclear weapons, and seems unwilling to give it up even if it destroys itself in the process. The Soviet Union, a recently reformed testaholic which had been on a bender of its own for decades, has been trying to get us to go on the wagon as well. In 1985 they quit nuclear testing for 19 months, and announced they would never test again if only we would take the pledge, too. When we wouldn't, they began testing again. And so the arms race went on.

Finally the world family, tired of being stuck in a state of codependency for so many years, decided it was about time for its Uncle Sam to get some help. It called the treaty conference, in hopes that this might lead the U.S. into a program of recovery. But the United States, clearly in denial, refused to admit it even had a testing problem. It, in fact, got very testy and told the world that it wasn't going to attend any future conferences on this matter, and would not even pay its share of the costs for another conference. In short, whether it tested or not was none of the world's business.



*But if nukes are outlawed, only outlaws will have nukes.
-- Rex May, United States*

However, our refusal to give up nuclear testing very definitely is the rest of the world's business. Many of these nations have stayed out of the arms race under the assurance that the superpowers would ultimately disarm. While that may not have seemed possible at the height of the Cold War, now that the Soviets have receded as the primary threat there is no excuse for continued escalation on our part. And yet, three times as much of the Energy Department's budget is going to nuclear weapons development this year over last year. This sort of thing costs us not just in the pocketbook, but in U. S. credibility as a seeker of world peace.

The only reason for this country to persist in the testing of nuclear weapons at this time is if it intends to continue the arms race, with or without an opponent. If it does so, more and more nations will have to build their own nuclear arsenals out of self-defense. And the next Saddam Hussein will have nuclear arms.

What is a better use of our resources, spending 50 million dollars to test one nuclear weapon, or 80 thousand to attend a treaty conference which might make such testing unnecessary? Or compare that figure to the one billion a day it costs to fight a war to, among other things, keep Iraq from getting their hands on nuclear weapons.

We should be willing to give up nuclear weapons testing in the name of world security. It's gotten to the point where we can't afford not to.

Write Sam Nunn (Wyche Fowler is already with us) or George Bush (good luck) and express your concern at the U.S. reluctance to join with world opinion on this issue. The Honorable Sam Nunn, U. S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510. The Honorable George Bush, President of the United States, Washington, DC 20500. — Kevin Murray

Revolution

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A recent nationwide survey shows that the public is ready for the renewable revolution. The survey of 1,200 registered voters, sponsored by the Union of Concerned Scientists and the Alliance to Save Energy, found that three-fourths (75 percent) of respondents supported renewable for their No. 1 or 2 funding priority for energy research funds, while two-thirds (67 percent) of respondents cited energy conservation for their first or second energy research funding priorities.

Meanwhile, nuclear energy got the energy research funding support of only one-quarter (25 percent) of respondents, and was listed by 43 percent of respondents as their last funding priority. Actual nuclear power funding (fission and fusion) in the Department of Energy's 1991 energy research budget is five times that of renewable energy and more than three times that of conservation.

Forty-two percent of the respondents said they "strongly oppose" more nuclear power plant construction and 20 percent said they "somewhat oppose" more nuclear power plant construction as part of a national energy policy. Thirty-two percent of respondents said they strongly favor/somewhat favor building more nuclear plants, with five percent saying they don't know.

SOURCES: Monika Bauerlein (*Utne Reader*), Safe Energy Communication Council

Nuclear Accident in DeKalb County

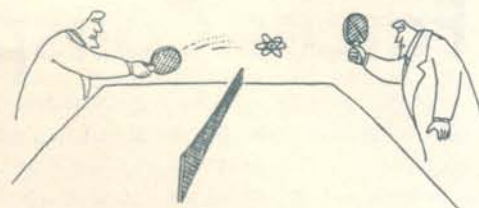
Cleanup activities at Radiation Sterilizers, Inc. in Decatur have virtually ground to a halt since citizen protests last fall prevented the U.S. Department of Energy from dumping 25,000 gallons of cesium-tainted water into the DeKalb County sewer. On March 18, 1991, ChemNuclear, the private firm hired by the U.S. government to perform the cleanup went into "maintenance mode" and now has two personnel on hand during business hours to keep an eye on things. (See previous issues of the GAINSAYER for background on the accident.)

Cleanup is halted while the DOE balks over the remaining so-called "harmless" water. Until the water is removed from the site, the rest of the contamination cannot be removed. Activists also hesitate at this point, because there really does not exist any permanent fix for the contaminated objects. Georgia activists do not feel good when South Carolina (site of the nation's low-level radioactive waste dump) takes the burden of our problem. Some have leaned toward making a monument out of our contaminated site to be

dismantled when our society finally addresses the nuclear waste problem.

But one thing is clear, the problem is the fault of the U.S. DOE and is their responsibility. Rumors abound as to why they have halted at this point. Jim Setser, Chief of the Georgia DNR, has articulated a fear that the DOE will bail out, leaving Georgia, with limited resources, to deal with the problem as best we can. The DOE is saying that the reason the money stopped flowing into this project is purely a budget coordination problem and they will resume cleanup. Also, the DNR has reason to think that they are getting ready to make a move on water removal.

Meanwhile, Jim Hardeman, a nuclear engineer and manager with DNR who has taken up nearly permanent residence in a trailer on the accident site for the past three years, tells us project workers found contamination under the building in the one sample taken before ChemNuclear stopped work on the cleanup. The extent of the contamination is still uncertain but good scientists would at least be prepared for the worst. Hardeman



also reports that although the water does not seem to be taking on any more of the cesium that is still imbedded in the steel walls of the cooling pond, the natural rate of evaporation has lowered the water level, exposing the contaminated walls, and the radiation levels in the containment room have been rising measurably.

To assist the DNR in seeing that the responsibility for cleanup is taken by the DOE, and in a timely fashion, we can contact either Governor Miller or Secretary of Energy James Watkins. At this point, it would probably be effective to simply ask them what is going on. It may be that they are not even aware of this situation. Write Secretary of Energy James Watkins, U.S. Department of Energy, Washington, DC 20585. Write Governor Zell Miller, Georgia State Capital, Atlanta, GA 30334.
-- Glenn Carroll

Energy Plan or Energy Sham?

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reserves in that area has been seriously questioned, Bush has threatened to veto any energy legislation that does not include these drilling rights. In effect, he is holding the entire national energy plan hostage unless the oil companies get their way. Although the administration claims that this is an effort to reduce our dependence on foreign oil, the true cause of this over-dependence is a lack of energy efficiency. Although other developed nations squeeze more out of each gallon of oil than we do, the concept of conservation is conspicuously ignored by the President and Energy Secretary James Watkins.

Also virtually ignored are the need for research money and other incentives for the development of renewable energy technology. Solar, photovoltaic, geothermal, and biomass energy methods have made great strides in efficiency in the past few years. Georgia Senator Wyche Fowler points out that American ingenuity developed photovoltaic technology, only to see the market taken over by the Japanese. The White House boasts of the grant money and incentive allowances that have in fact been given to

renewables. Yet these are mere crumbs compared to the massive subsidies that have been bestowed on the nuclear power industry.

The National Energy Strategy of 1991 repeatedly makes the point that it takes a "balanced" approach. Sadly, it does everything but. Americans, and even other countries, look to our government to lead the way in an innovative and far-sighted approach to energy. We have been let down. Despite the rhetoric, what we have been handed increases, rather than decreases, energy consumption in general — and U.S. dependence on foreign oil specifically.

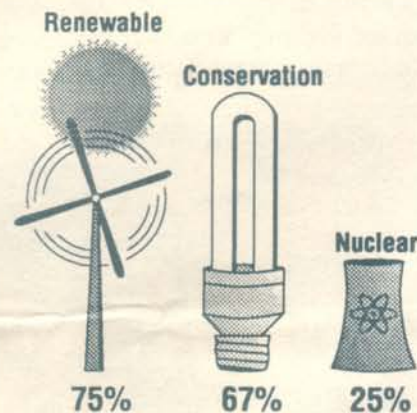
Two dozen legislative proposals are currently circulating in Congress to counteract this lack of responsible foresight. Hopefully, with our input, the eventual energy legacy we leave will not be so punishing to the next generation that will be entrusted with the care and feeding of our earth. — Tom Tortorici

SOURCE: Christian Science Monitor

DON'T DRIVE DAY
MAY 9 • 872-9653
AMERICAN LUNG ASSOCIATION

Energy Survey Says...

In a December 1990 national poll, a vast majority of Americans ranked renewable energy and conservation as their #1 or #2 priority for government funding (75% and 67%). Nuclear power ranked last (25%).



Sources: Research/Strategy/Management, Greenberg-Lake, The Analysis Group
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BIKE TO WORK DAY
MAY 21 • 659-2036

Forces Conspire for Nuke Comeback

Maybe you thought the nuclear industry was collapsing under the weight of its own problems — cost overruns, nuclear waste, accidents — but they've got President Bush on their side, and they are staging an elaborate plan for a comeback. We should be able to fight this battle with one hand tied behind our backs, right? But as we study the game plan, we gain a new appreciation for the depth of their effort, and have a new sense that we will really have to put a big effort into stopping it.

Basically we should start working on two areas. The National Energy Strategy which has been put before Congress must be amended or stopped. And as long as we can keep them from building a new nuclear plant for either weapons production or power generation, we'll be in pretty good shape.

Here's a bit of what we know of their plan. It operates on several fronts simultaneously — an "inherently safe" reactor design, licensing tricks which shut out the public, ratemaking changes which protect the industry, and boondoggles to relieve the pressure of backed up nuclear waste.

NEW "IMPROVED" REACTOR DESIGNS

They have come up with a new so-called "inherently safe" nuclear reactor design. For example, GE has a design which does away with the metal-clad fuel rods currently in use. The new fuel design calls for ceramic-clad pellets, and in theory, a runaway chain reaction (meltdown) cannot occur. Designs are

also being worked on with government grants by Westinghouse, and General Atomics.

The Union of Concerned Scientists recently commissioned a study which found major flaws in these designs. The study points out that all of the new designs rely on passive safety features, abandoning the current "defense in depth" concept of overlapping safety systems. All the eggs are in the accident prevention basket, with no safety features which would allow operators to intervene and mitigate an accident. The study further points out that the passive safety approach completely fails to address certain accident possibilities such as station black-out, earthquakes, and graphite and sodium fires, and leaves the operators with no options for action.

The purveyors of new reactors are so enamored of their passive safety approach that they are suggesting, as an attractive feature of their product, that fewer operation personnel will be required. They envision one control room for nine reactors, staffed by only three operators.

This is only a small sample of the faults found by the UCS study. The National Energy Strategy Bill before Congress would provide an additional \$500 million to pursue this new design, for an industry which has already been subsidized by the taxpayer to the tune of \$200 BILLION. Just say NO!

LICENSING

They're getting us coming and going on this one. Most of the suggestions on licensing

issues have as the bottom line KEEPING US OUT OF THE PROCESS. The most dramatic change that's planned is the so-called "One-Step Licensing" where a utility seeking to build a certified design would receive its operating license simultaneously with its construction license. This means that in the 10 to 20 years that the plant is under construction, no new issues can be raised before operation to speak to, say, new research, new information about construction quality, new information about safety.

Emergency planning zones for human beings living near nuclear plants will be a thing of the past.

Moreover, a utility may purchase a site and acquire a license to build a nuclear plant there without even having a specific design in mind at the time, and their license will be good for up to 40 years. Thirdly, once a new standardized design is approved it may be used on any site without review.

RATEMAKING

The next item hits close to home. Cost overruns have been probably the major factor in the decline of nuclear power. The barrier they're trying to remove is that nasty business of trying to get one of these expensive babies into the rate base after 20 years of

DOE's TALES

On February 7, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) released its long-awaited report on the future of the nuclear bomb complex. DOE is proceeding with plans to rebuild, relocate, and modernize the bomb complex, and this report has given us a small glimpse into what may be in store.

DOE, which employs about 100,000 people at 13 major facilities (covering around 3,000 square miles) in 12 states, is set for major change. The reconfiguration report, which is really a planning document, lays out general modernization plans, and says that the new complex, designated "Complex-21," would be "smaller, less diverse, and less expensive to operate."

DOE, amazingly, did acknowledge that world conditions have lessened the "need" for nuclear weapons, looking at cuts in the stockpile from 30% to 85%. But, as usual, conclusions point to a bomb complex fully



construction and cost overruns and imprudence. Georgia played right into their hands in the 1991 session with the passage of House Bill 280 which says, if the Public Service Commission approves construction of a new power plant, they commit at that time to allowing the entire cost of construction to be recovered along with a nice profit (see related article on p. 6). The resources of state ratemaking bodies would be overtaxed to perform decent analyses of such situations.

NUCLEAR WASTE

Most obviously, it seems pretty silly to pursue new ways to generate nuclear waste when we haven't figured out a way to deal with all the waste we have on hand now. The "new" waste would be just as deadly as the old, and bulkier, resulting in more volume. Not only that, but they are so sure we are going to love these new reactors that they expect to dot the countryside with about 1,000 of them! That would result in more than 10 times the waste generation we can't deal with now.

Remember BRC? That's part of the plan. By calling one-third of the nation's low-level waste Below Regulatory Concern and taking the "Caution: Radioactive" label off, this stuff will be put in the municipal landfill!

Of course, that leaves two-thirds of the low-level waste and all of the high-level waste. The National Energy Strategy is attempting

to remove restrictions that now require a permanent repository be under construction before a temporary facility can be used. They want to move ahead with a temporary waste site now. Then we can take all that waste off the hands of the utilities, not even pretend to deal with it in a permanent fashion, and keep making more! And finally, no one is addressing a giant hidden cost of nuclear energy — decommissioning. The first decommissioning, of a small unique reactor, has been tackled. It was expensive (nearly \$100 million). Even if the new reactors didn't have any other problems . . . decommissioning 1,000 extra reactors in the 21st century is a foreboding prospect.

* * *

What can we do? Some suggested strategies for heading off this potential problem (and please let us know your ideas!) are:

1. Don't let them build a new reactor! They will probably try to build one of the designs as a new production reactor for nuclear bomb production, maybe at the Savannah River Site in our backyard. Another design would be tried out by either weapons producers, or commercially. By any measure, no one wants to foot the bill for a nuclear project, so the model advanced reactors will probably be attempted by our government. Participate in public hearings conducted by the DOE like

the one coming up about Savannah River in May (see article below) or write Senator Sam Nunn (Chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee) or Wyche Fowler (Senate Energy Committee) of your opposition. The Honorable Sam Nunn (or Wyche Fowler), U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510.

2. Write your congressman and tell him to completely switch the balance of the National Energy Strategy (H.R. 1301) from nuclear and oil production to renewables and conservation. Also mention to him the parts of the Strategy that concern you most, *i.e.*, one-step licensing, high-level waste policies that threaten state's rights, subsidies to the nuclear industry, etc. Many of the pro-nuclear aspects of the Strategy, most notably "one-step licensing," are also being pushed through another bill "Johnston-Wallop." This is a double whammy, so double whammy 'em back and mention both bills. Wyche Fowler is a key figure on this or write The Honorable (Congressman's Name), U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515.

3. Write Governor Miller and ask him not to sign the House Bill 280 which guarantees Georgia Power a return on any investment, wise or not. Governor Zell Miller, State Capitol, Atlanta, GA 30334.

— Glenn Carroll

SOURCES: Nuclear Information and Resource Service (NIRS), Union of Concerned Scientists (USC), MHB Technical Associates.

from the NUCLEAR CRYPT

capable of building a massive force of a new generation of (smart?) nuclear weapons.

FATE OF SRP?

In the report, no clear answers were given as to the future of our local contaminated bomb factory — the Savannah River Plant — but it does seem that expansion of the facility is at hand. SRP may be slated to receive a new nuclear reactor for plutonium and tritium production, as well as the plutonium-processing operations from the Rocky Flats Plant. Rocky Flats, located near Denver, is due to close down in the next 10 to 15 years.

Already, a new plutonium recycling facility at SRP — the New Special Recovery Facility — is slated to begin operation this summer. The facility was built without any environmental documents being prepared for public review, in violation of the National Environmental Policy Act.

Secretary of Energy Watkins announced on February 4 that the K-reactor, an unsafe Cold War antique built in the mid-1950s, would be restarted this summer. The reactor would resume production of tritium, a radioactive gas which boosts the explosive power of a nuclear warhead, and would operate until a new reactor was available. Restart waste to date? \$2.1 billion+.

CALL IT CORPORATE SOCIALISM

Getting down to the essence of the matter, one finds little more than a huge welfare project for certain corporations. In 1980 less than 20% of the DOE budget went to weapons programs. Now, about 60% of the \$17 billion budget goes to weapons sites, which are managed by huge corporations like Westinghouse.

And in this year's Congressional session, it appears politicians are more concerned

about employment impacts of DOE decisions rather than any impacts based on what has been touted as "national security." Mindful of employment impacts, we propose that the 25,000 employees at SRP at once be transferred to clean up activities. We would gladly pay for them to finally be doing something productive.

TAKE ACTION!

On May 24th there will be a hearing in Augusta at the Holiday Inn West on the new production reactor (NPR). Members of GANE and Greenpeace are pulling together a possible colorful trip down I-20. Could be fun if we all go together!

—Tom Clements, Greenpeace, 404/876-8256
IMPORTANT NOTE: Mark Wednesday, August 24, 1991, on your calendar now. DOE hearings in Atlanta on that date. More in the next issue of the GAINSAYER.

NUKE NOTES

CHERNOBYL TRAGIC TO BIZARRE

As we mark the fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear accident in the Soviet Union, we hear the expected awful news -- but mixed with the bizarre.

Moving reports have come in about Olga Korbut the "darling" of 1972 and 1976 Olympics who resides in Byelorussia -- the area of the Ukraine hardest hit by fallout from the accident. She has sent her 12-year-old son to live with friends in the U.S. while remaining behind out of kinship with her people. "It's hard even to walk outside, because I see the suffering of people, and it hurts me. But I feel I must stay, because I have the responsibility to help my people with my contacts in the West," she says.

The Soviet government is bringing criminal charges against officials who covered up the disaster and failed to protect people from the radiation for years. The official death count is 31 lives lost, but citizens say it is more like 500.

The crazy thing (as if the whole mess isn't?) is that Kievturist, a Soviet tour company, is selling a tour package to the radiation-zone around Chernobyl. All trips will begin and end with Geiger counter tests to check visitors' exposure to radiation. If treatment at a radiological medical center is needed, it will be provided "at no extra charge."

-- Glenn Carroll

SOURCES: AP Wire Reports

ELECTRIC BILL

Georgia's legislature has approved a bill that allows regulated utility companies to seek preapproval from the state Public Service Commission for powerplant construction costs. Once costs are "pre-certified," a utility will be guaranteed full cost recovery from ratepayers unless PSC finds fraud or imprudence during construction.

If signed into law by Gov. Zell Miller the bill will cover the state's two investor-owned electric utilities, Georgia Power Co. and Savannah Electric & Power Co.



In 1987 PSC disallowed \$1.1 billion of a total \$8.8 billion in construction costs for Georgia Power's Vogtle nuclear plant. That decision prompted Georgia Power to propose a measure that in its original form stripped PSC of all authority to carry out prudence reviews. The Commission said the bill would put all construction risk on ratepayers and overload the commission staff.

During legislative debate, PSC's prudence review power was restored. It was also given authority to review utility long-term resource plans every three years and charge extra fees to cover the new work.

Georgia Power says it must build as much as 4,800 Mw of gas turbine peaking capacity in the late 1990s and a new baseload power plant by 2002. -- *Engineering News Record*

1/28/91: UTILITY WILL CONVERT NUKE UNIT Public Service Co. of Colorado plans to defuel and convert its idled Fort St. Vrain nuclear reactor to burn gas and possibly use some solar collectors to deliver its rated 330 Mw. "We are looking for environmentally acceptable solutions to repower Fort St. Vrain," PSC Conversion Manager Gary Liljenberg says. The solar study will assess both photovoltaic and thermal possibilities. (*Engineering News Record*)

2/23/91: HIGH RADIATION DOSES KILL 3 Twenty-seven cancer patients were accidentally exposed to lethal doses of radiation in a Spanish hospital, and most are likely to die, a health official reports. Three patients have already died. A judge is investigating the state-run University Hospital in Zaragoza, where radiation equipment malfunctioned over a 10-day period in December. Similar accidents involving the equipment, called a linear electron accelerator, occurred in 1985 in Marietta, Ga.

3/11/91: ANTI-NUCLEAR PROTESTERS ARRESTED IN NEVADA Sheriff's deputies cited 183 people for trespassing during a peaceful protest at the main entrance to the Nevada Test Site nuclear facility. About 275 people took part in the two-hour demonstration.

3/18/91: BELOW REGULATORY CONCERN On 2/26/91 the NRC announced that it will not accept industry petitions seeking to actuate the agency's BRC policy announced last June. Instead, a top agency official will begin a plan to seek national consensus on deregulating about 30 percent of all "low"

level wastes. Bill Magavern, an attorney with US PIRG, told *Nuclear Waste News*: "We think there already is a consensus -- that BRC is unacceptable." (*Atoms & Waste, Don't Waste U.S.*)

3/18/91: NUCLEAR POWER SUCKS In 1989, a scuba diver was sucked through the 1,500-foot intake pipe into the cooling pond of the St. Lucie nuclear power plant in Florida. In February, it was a 1,200-pound manatee. T-shirt designers looking for proof that nuclear power sucks should have a field day! (*Atoms & Waste, Don't Waste U.S.*)

3/22/91: GERMANY SCRAPS NUCLEAR PROJECT The German government has scrapped the nation's only fast-breeder nuclear reactor after nearly two decades of work on -- and protests against -- the \$4.4 billion project. The research and technology minister, Heinz Riesenhuber, said the federal government would stop financing construction on the sophisticated reactor.

4/2/91: EMORY TO STUDY S.C. NUCLEAR SITE The Department of Energy plans to fund a three-year study by Emory University and the Medical University of South Carolina to survey cancer and birth defects in the area around the Savannah River Site near Aiken, SC. The grant will be used to develop a registry to record the incidence of specific cancers and birth defects in counties within 50 miles of the nuclear fuels plant.

4/3/91: U.S. PLANS NUCLEAR ROCKET TO LOFT GIANT WEAPONS The Defense Department has begun secretly developing a nuclear-powered rocket that would be propelled into orbit or pushed through space by a compact nuclear reactor. The study is under the direction of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) program. The program's existence was revealed by the Federation of American Scientists, who denounced the idea as a potential public hazard and a waste of money. (*Washington Post*)

4/4/91: An underground nuclear weapons test with an explosive yield of up to 150 kilotons of TNT, the highest allowed under the Limited Test Ban Treaty, was rescheduled because winds were blowing from the Nevada blast site toward Las Vegas, 100 miles from ground zero.

4/5/91: PROTESTERS FAIL TO HALT NUCLEAR TEST Authorities arrested 66 anti-nuclear activists trying to block workers from entering the remote Nevada desert test site. The huge blast caused some high-rise

buildings to sway in Las Vegas, 105 miles away.

4/6/91: L.A. COURT VETOES UTILITY RATE HIKE The Louisiana Supreme Court agreed with a regulatory board that Gulf States Utilities cannot charge customers \$1.4 billion of the \$4.4 billion it cost to build the River Bend nuclear plant. In its petition to the Louisiana Public Service Commission, Gulf States sought a rate increase that would enable the utility to pay its share of building River Bend 1, a 940-megawatt nuclear power plant at St. Francisville. The PSC had ruled it was an imprudent venture.

4/9/91: SOUTHERN CO. EXECES GET RAISES DESPITE DROP IN PROFITS The Southern Co.'s top executives all received pay increases last year, despite a nearly 29 percent decline in net income from the prior year. For example, Ed Addison, president and chief executive, received a 12.2 percent boost to \$883,775. He also received non-cash compensation of \$27,500 including club membership fees, personal use of company cars, air travel expenses for his wife, personal income tax services, security system expenses and merchandise discounts. Bill Dahlberg, president and chief executive of the Georgia Power Co. subsidiary, received a 10.5 percent increase to \$551,193. Most of the 1990 decline in Southern Co.'s income is a 69 cents-a-share charge from lost investment in nuclear Plant Vogtle.

4/12/91: CHINA SAID TO GIVE ALGERIA NUCLEAR HELP New information casts doubt on China's repeated assurances to the U.S. that it does not engage in nuclear proliferation or help other countries develop nuclear weapons. China's reported help to Algeria could be a serious setback in efforts to stop the spread of nuclear technology.

4/15/91: OSHA TELLS DOE TO INCREASE SAFETY After completing a review of the federal government's contractor-operated nuclear facilities, government safety officials are recommending that the Dept. of Energy beef up its safety and health programs. The review, conducted by the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration, says DOE's existing efforts to improve safety and health programs have not been sufficient.

"DOE remains a mission-directed, production-oriented organization in which pressures to get the job done often overrule safety and health concerns," says OSHA's report. (*Engineering News Record*)

SOURCES: Unless otherwise noted all reports are AP Wire Service Reports.

Report From Trident To Life: The W88 Warhead

Accident Waiting to Happen

Back in 1983, government officials approved a new warhead design for the Trident nuclear submarine, located in Kings Bay, GA, that would give a bigger blast and have a longer range than current warheads.

Now a scientific panel has called into question the safety of this warhead, the W88, saying it is susceptible to an "unintended nuclear yield" — an atomic explosion in layman's language — if mishandled during the loading. Also, a fire or some other mishap might cause a release of plutonium into the environment according to the panel appointed by Congress to review nuclear weapons safety.

Before this report came out in December, the Department of Energy had been chomping at the bit to begin production of the W88 which had been delayed NOT because of safety considerations but because of the shutdown of the notorious Rocky Flats plant in Colorado. Only Rocky Flats is equipped to make triggers for the W88.

In fact, last March DOE Secretary James D. Watkins told Congress there would be "severe ramifications" for the Trident program if operations were not quickly resumed at Rocky Flats. By May when reports questioning W88's safety first hit the media, Watkins was less demanding and admitted had he been in charge when the warhead design was approved, he would have found it unacceptable.

The problem with the W88 is that it uses high explosives (HE) rather than the less volatile and weaker insensitive high explosive (IHE). Pound for pound it takes more IHE than HE to trigger a nuclear blast, meaning the missile payload and range suffers if IHE is used in place of HE. The HE may be susceptible to an accidental explosion because the warhead sits right next to the third-stage rocket motor. An accidental ignition of the propellant in the rocket could cause the HE to explode, either raining plutonium dust in the vicinity or causing a full-fledged nuclear explosion.

These sobering possibilities have some scientists so concerned that experts at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory prepared maps of potential plutonium fallout over Spokane, Washington, which is near the Pacific Trident base. No such study has been done for Kings Bay, the Atlantic home port.

The review panel recommended the government reconsider the design of the W88 and the House Armed Service Committee, which commissioned the report, requested all its recommendations be followed. So far the Departments of Energy and Defense have said they will try to implement the report's findings but have not committed to redesigning the W88.

Meanwhile, the Navy has said it may use the Trident I missile warhead — W76 — in place of the W88. (W88 is for the Trident II missile.) But the Navy has been reluctant to give up the W88 or agree to a lengthy redesign process because of its heavier firepower — 475 kilotons compared to the 100 kilotons of the W76.

Now is the time to write to Congress and urge them to scratch production of this weapon altogether in the interest of world peace or at minimum to further investigate the safety of the W88. Representatives Lindsay Thomas and Richard Ray, both of Georgia, have shown interest in this issue. Also include a message if you wish to oppose the restart of Rocky Flats (which is vital to the production of the W88) because of its high contamination and numerous safety problems. It is traditional to address your congressman as The Honorable (representative's name), U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515.

—Denise Laffen



JOHN OAKES

VIEW from the CLOSET



If I can't find any news or ball games on the tube, I'm apt to zap my way through the viewing menu. Recently, I zapped upon Jack Lemmon warily eyeing some vibrating turbines. "China Syndrome!"

You know the storyline: Antihero bucks the system, the odds, the government — to do right! Shades of Streep in "Silkwood," or even Howard Roark.

"China Syndrome" deals with one of our favorite subjects. It plays a little like the Allen Mosbaugh story over at Plant Vogtle. Happily, Allen was only fired. Poor Jack gets blown away by the guys in white hats in the movie.

I had seen it before, back when I rarely came out of my closet. It was powerful in its implications then. This time, it was "deja vu."

There's a public hearing in the movie. The crowd is sprinkled with authority figures in mufti. The walls are studded with uniformed police.

It was filmed in '78, but it could have been the NRC or DOE or RSI hearings last year. Government servants are still insuring "absolute safety," and dubbing the "peaceniks" and environmentalists as "paranoid" about radiation and health. And, they are still turning every hearing room into an armory!

There's another scene where Jack's superiors scoff at concerns for health and safety. Seems that shutting down the plant to reweld the turbines would cause major financial losses.

Ah, the almighty dollar — stock justification for insanity. Like at Hanford.

An ABC News series the week I saw the movie set the cost for cleaning up 50 years of national defense misdirection at Hanford at a paltry \$30 billion. Wonder how many dollars (and downwinders) preventative maintenance could have saved?

Alas, new clear thinking remains anathema in the nuclear industry.

That same week, an OSHA report was released citing 622 violations at eight federal energy facilities, "including SRP." SRP? Energy facility? They call bombs energy now?

In the newspaper article, uncorrected health and safety hazards were attributed to management which "did not consider it a priority." Imagine that! Health and safety are *not* priority at nuclear facilities. Don't worry — be happy.

But, it gets even more convoluted. OSHA citations normally carry hefty fines and penalties. So, those 622 violations will be dealt with severely, right?

Maybe in OZ . . . or on Tralfamadore! Here on earth, however, OSHA has no legal jurisdiction over DOE. So, even when the right hand knows what the left hand is doing, it can't do a thing about it!

Ludicrous? Wait until you hear the government's solution!

Dear old DOE must overhaul its procedures, and retrain its officials regarding OSHA

requirements, and develop a five-year plan for safety and health. Well, that certainly relieves my fears!

And, to insure future health and safety and peace of mind, our government is going to award financial incentives for complying with OSHA Rules to the private contractors running the DOE facilities.

Got that? If you run a business, and don't meet OSHA requirements, you'll get a hefty fine. But, if you're a government contractor at a nuclear site, and do meet OSHA requirements, you'll get a blinking reward.

That's what's great about America. Sometimes, it really does pay to do the right thing!

Beam me up, Scottie. Use the coordinates for my closet. — Dennis Bishop

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