



153 E Street, S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003.

OUTLINE OF ACTIVITIES

The National Intervenor is a coalition of citizens groups formed in January, 1972, for the purpose of participating in the Atomic Energy Commission national rule-making hearings on 1) the adequacy of the Emergency Core Cooling System (ECCS) designed to prevent the catastrophic effects of a loss-of-coolant accident and 2) the As Low As Practicable (ALAP) amount of radioactive releases of nuclear power plants. A third rule-making hearing began on February 1, 1973, and the National Intervenor became a participant. This hearing covers the environmental effects of the uranium fuel cycle.

GOALS:

Based on the disclosures of the national rule-making hearings the National Intervenor call for a moratorium on the construction and licensing of new nuclear power plants and reduction of power output of currently operating plants (fission reactors). The problems of radioactive wastes created by nuclear fission power plants must be satisfactorily resolved.

STRATEGY:

1. Continued participation in the rule-making hearings in support of the Union of Concerned Scientists and other independent scientists in their contentions on nuclear fission power plants as a threat to public health and safety.
2. To act as a clearinghouse in disseminating information to our member groups, the press, the Congress and citizens.
3. To provide opportunities for discussions and seminars in an effort to educate our elected representatives on nuclear safety issues in order to prepare legislation in the public interest.

SUPPORT:

National Intervenor is supported entirely by contributions.
Tax deductible contributions should be made payable to:

NATIONAL INTERVENORS FUND / Environmental Action Foundation (NI/EAF)
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Hackensack, N. J.

SCIENCE

Nader cites dangers of nuclear age

By SANDY SCHUSSEL
Correspondent

The United States is in danger, says Ralph Nader, and it may be too late to do anything about it.

Talking about the potential hazard from nuclear power plants, the outspoken consumer advocate proclaimed that whole sections of the nation could be wiped off the map in the event of a simple accident.

"I think we'll look back on nuclear power as the engineering Vietnam of the United States domestic scene," Nader said, "It's a terrible mistake but unfortunately the government has been committed to it."

Current danger

There are 30 nuclear power plants operating in the United States, producing three or four per cent of its electrical energy. Nader claims that these pose a threat to national safety which is he said more than hypothetical.

Speaking Friday at a lecture sponsored by Dominican College in Orangeburg, Nader pointed out that if the country were pockmarked with a thousand nuclear reactors it would be open to catastrophe.

Nader warned that the emergency cooling system in the reactors is still untested.

The system is supposed to back up a cooling system that depends on large-scale sources of water, needed to keep the reactor at workable temperatures.

"If there was an accident in the nuclear reactor core," he said, "the core can begin to melt down."

"After a certain point, unless it can be shut down, it will melt through concrete," he said.

A substantial portion of the radioactive material would then escape into the atmosphere, Nader explained.

Sabotage and waste

He estimated property damage from one reactor mishap at \$7 million, and loss of lives from radioactive pollution at 200,000, citing two studies as his source.

Nader warned that there is no protection from sabotage at the reactors and accidents during transportation, and storing of wastes, which take 25,000 years to neutralize. All three represent potential poisoning of the environment by radioactive byproducts.

These dangers, and the discovery that nuclear power is no longer as economical as scientists once thought it would be, brought Nader to condemn the government's commitment to this form of power.

Nader suggested that taxes be spent on harnessing such natural resources as the heat underneath the earth. He urged Americans to examine dangerous policies and to speak out against them, instead of just accepting them as progress.

Energy and National Security

It is characteristic of a democratic form of government that major legislation is usually not enacted unless public opinion has crystallized in support of it. When an issue has dramatic appeal, far-reaching legislation is often enacted quickly. When issues are complex and non-emotional, the government moves slowly, if at all. An example of the latter attitude has been the government's treatment of the energy problem. Our national security, financial stability, and standard of living are at stake, but the federal response has not been commensurate with the need. Until recently, most of the talk about energy has been about the problems that will arise in 1985 or 2000. This has the effect of pigeonholing the matter. Who can sustain a high level of excitement about the year 1985?

The latest figures show that we cannot afford the luxury of sleeping for another 12 years. Despite all the publicity about the need to conserve energy, its use continues to expand. The impact of environmental regulations has accelerated the demand for petroleum and its products. Consumption of these resources this year has been exceeding that of last year by about 9 percent, requiring increased dependence on foreign sources at heavy cost in foreign exchange. This winter, about 30 percent of our petroleum will be imported, a sharp rise from the percentage a year ago. Pessimists have been talking of a 50 percent dependence in 1985, but the current rate of change indicates that that figure could be reached in 4 or 5 years unless drastic action is taken.

Along the East Coast of the United States, virtually all fuel for electric power plants is imported. Oil has completely replaced coal. Reserve storage facilities for oil are inadequate. If supplies were stopped for some weeks, we would be in major difficulties. If we were prudent, we would see to it that a 180-day supply was held in reserve. We would also see to it that power plants could be quickly converted to burn coal. In principle, we have enormous reserves of coal. In practice, we are rapidly making these reserves unavailable for use. Coal-firing equipment in power plants is being scrapped; new oil-fired plants have been built that cannot quickly be converted to coal. If our oil supply were cut off, we would be sitting helplessly on much of the world's best coal deposits, unable to use them effectively.

In principle, we can obtain liquid hydrocarbons and methane from coal, and we can treat coal or stack gases to remove sulfur. In practice, the commitment to solving our immediate fuel problems is relatively trivial. What is needed are demonstration plants on the billion-dollar scale. We also need a national program that provides incentives for the individual citizen to be sparing in his use of energy. This probably can be achieved best by making energy more expensive. However, we should not give windfall profits to the oil companies. They have tremendous resources, both financial and technological, but they have not devoted a reasonable fraction of these resources to safeguarding this country from petroleum blackmail.

Indeed, it is questionable whether the rules under which these large companies operate now serve the national interest. This question and others have been addressed lucidly in a recent policy paper prepared for Senator Henry Jackson (D-Wash.).* The Administration is preparing a belated response to the energy problem. It is to be hoped that the recommendations will be more dynamic and comprehensive than indicated by the 1974 budget message.—PHILIP H. ABELSON



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* *Toward a Rational Policy for Oil and Gas Imports* (Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1973)