

NUCLEAR ENERGY AND THE NADERITE CHARLATANS

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Nuclear energy is once again a popular subject of debate and controversy, thanks to the power plant accident that occurred at Three Mile Island in Pennsylvania on March 28. No one was killed, no one was injured, no significant amount of radiation escaped into the surrounding area, and the back-up safety systems, which had to overcome an unbelievable amount of mismanagement by plant personnel, did eventually work. Still the incident triggered a wave of mass hysteria that spread across and beyond the nation.

Like termites emerging out of the woodwork in spring, all of the old professional demonstrators, inactive and without a real unifying cause since the halcyon days of Vietnam and Watergate, Nixon, converged on Washington, 70,000 strong, a few weeks later to march and chant their slogans again. Fonda, Hayden, Abzug, Nader, Spock and even Jerry Brown took advantage of the opportunity and came to the class reunion. The press and TV networks obliged and covered this newsworthy event in great detail. Three months earlier when 70,000 anti-abortionists put on a similar demonstration in Washington, none of the familiar faces showed up, the press coverage was minimal and the TV cameras were elsewhere.

In the June 19 issue of *Esquire*, Barry Commoner's new book on energy policy is reviewed favorably. Commoner is against further development of nuclear power and is now an advocate of solar power as the future chief source of energy. In another article, Dr. Richard Hellman, once an assistant to the Chairman of the Federal Power Commission and a "leading expert on nuclear energy," is quoted as saying that nuclear power carries unacceptably greater risks and that it is economically not feasible as a source of energy. Neither of these experts happens to be a nuclear scientist. Commoner, a biologist, and Hellman, an economist, like most of the other "distinguished scientists" opposing nuclear power—Linus Pauling, Hannes Alven, Paul Erlich, etc.—have made their names in fields unrelated to nuclear physics.

In this issue of the *Bulletin*, Dr. John Watson, Director of Radiation Therapy at Medical Center and Chairman of the Medical Advisory Committee for the State of Georgia on the Use of Nuclear Material, presents a brief, basic course on radiation and the safety of nuclear energy. [See Special Report, page 10]. Much of the background material in John's article comes from a book, *The Health Hazards of Not going Nuclear*, written by Peter Beckman and published in 1976. Dr. Beckmann, a PhD and Doctor of Science in the field of electromagnetics and an authority on questions of energy, is from the Electrical Engineering Department of the University of Colorado.

The book explains in everyday English the basics of atomic fission and nuclear power and discusses in complete detail the pros and cons of nuclear energy in organization of closed-panel medical practice plans associated with insurance companies.

Eight months later, in March 1962, it was he who, by virtue of some frantic letter writing within the short space of five weeks, hastily organized the PCHCATSS (Physician's Committee for Health Care for the Aged Through Social Security), and then personally led a group of 27 physicians to the White House where, through magically opened doors, they were enthusiastically welcomed by President Kennedy and Mr. Ribicoff in the flesh. (It was suggested at the time that JFK might just have known they were coming since the press and TV coverage was a national enterprise and the profit motive. They tend toward the totalitarian approach of wanting more control, more regulation and more regimentation, preferably, of course, under their supervision. As a class, these people are loosely united in using any cause as bait to mobilize the gullible against the "Corporate State," "Big Business," "Big Oil," "vested interests," "The Establishment" or whatever catch phrase for the common enemy is in vogue at the moment. The anti-nuclear movement happens to be the latest popular cause.

Beckmann postulates that the main motivation behind most of these crusading enthusiasts is that of self-interest. They are an upper-middle-class elite. They are a privileged class whose privileges are steadily being lost as a result of capitalism, free enterprise, science and technology. The mass affluence created by our successful American industrial society is crowding them off the highways, on the beaches, out of the mountains and National Parks and inconveniencing them on their transatlantic jet travels, in the fancy restaurants and even at their favorite, once exclusive, European watering spots. They not only resent having to share their once-privileged pleasures, they also resent having to rub elbows with a common herd of franchise operators, truck drivers, giddy secretaries and beer-drinking plumbers. But, they still retain one decisive privilege, and they will fight to hold on to it. They are the public opinion molders, the tone setters and the educators. They still control overwhelmingly the mass media, the schools and the universities; fill the federal bureaucracies; and are in control of the brainwashing industry.

In the case of nuclear power, this influential, nonelected, elitist class has been successful in playing down the health hazards of nonnuclear energy to the public, while at the same time has been surprisingly successful in exaggerating the dangers of nuclear power and scaring the public, not just with distortions, but often with deliberate and outright falsehoods.

Well, whether or not you agree with Dr. Beckmann's ideas as to the motivation

behind the Nader followers and the no-nuclear crusaders and if you want to find out for yourself if a nuclear plant can explode, if coal mining is safer than uranium mining, if solar energy could be a practical source of mass energy, if natural gas holds an answer, or if nuclear emissions will make the earth "uninhabitable for generations to come" you had better read the book. Actually, the last 20 pages of Dr. Beckman's 182-page book deals with an analysis behind the Nader followers and the no-nuclear crusaders. Also how is it that if nuclear emissions will make the earth "uninhabitable," Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the ultimate hot spots of nuclear radiation contamination only a few years ago, are once again teeming with people and are still habitable? The book is well documented with a bibliography of 80 references. It can be obtained for \$5.95 in soft cover from the Golem Press, Box 1342, Boulder, Colorado 80306.

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