

Nuclear “Regulators” Are Captured By the Nuclear Industry

By [Washington's Blog](#)

Theme: [Environment](#)

Global Research, May 03, 2011

[Washington's Blog](#) 3 May 2011

As I [noted](#) last month:

Just like BP captured the agencies which were supposed to regulate it, nuclear agencies have been wholly captured by the nuclear power companies

And the same is true of the economic crisis. As I've [extensively documented](#), the crisis was caused by big banks and other financial players taking irresponsible and speculative gambles, committing fraud and fudging the numbers, using too much leverage, moral hazard, and other dangerous behavior. See [this](#) and [this](#). And - just as with the nuclear and oil industries - the government “regulators” have all be captured by the big companies they are supposed to police, helped the bank robbers pull off the heist, and then [helped cover it up afterwards](#).

This essay will focus on the capture of nuclear agencies world-wide.

Of course, Japanese nuclear regulators have been captured by the local nuclear companies. See [this](#), [this](#) and this:

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As I [pointed out](#) last month:

The Christian Science Monitor [noted](#) recently:

Just as the BP oil spill one year ago heaped scrutiny on the United State’s Minerals Management Service, harshly criticized for lax drilling oversight and cozy ties with the oil industry, the nuclear crisis in Japan is shining a light on that nation’s safety practices.

[Russian nuclear accident specialist Iouli Andreev, who as director of the Soviet Spetsatom clean-up agency helped in the efforts 25 years ago to clean up Chernobyl] has also accused the IAEA of being too close with corporations. “This is only a fake organization because every organization which depends on the nuclear industry - and the IAEA depends on the nuclear industry - cannot

perform properly.”

Indeed, the entire purpose of the IAEA – according to its [website](#) – is to promote nuclear power:

The IAEA is the world’s center of cooperation in the nuclear field. It was set up as the world’s “Atoms for Peace” organization in 1957 within the United Nations family. The Agency works with its Member States and multiple partners worldwide to promote safe, secure and peaceful nuclear technologies.

As I’ve [noted](#):

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission is no better.

As nuclear engineer Arnie Gundersen, Duane Peterson (president of VPIRG & coordinator for the campaign to retire Vermont Yankee nuclear plant), investigative reporter Harvey Wasserman and Paul Gallay (executive director of Riverkeeper) point out in a roundtable discussion:

- The NRC won’t even begin conducting its earthquake study for Indian Point nuclear power plant in New York until after relicensing is complete in 2013, because the NRC doesn’t consider a big earthquake “a serious risk”
- Congressman Markey has said there is a cover up. Specifically, Markey alleges that the head of the NRC told everyone not to write down risks they find from an earthquake greater than 6.0 (the plant was only built to survive a 6.0 earthquake)
- The budget for the NRC comes from the nuclear power companies [just like [banks fund the Federal Reserve](#)]
- The NRC is wholly captive to industry
- The NRC has never turned down the request of a nuclear power plant to be relicensed in the United States. Relicensing is solely a paper process; there is no safety review.
- The NRC’s assumptions regarding a worst-case accident are ridiculous. For example, the NRC assumes only 1% of the fuel could meltdown, while 70% melted down at Fukushima. The NRC assumes no loss of containment, while there has been a major loss of containment in reactors 1-3 (especially 2) at Fukushima.
- “If there was a free market in energy, nuclear power would be over ... immediately”. Nuclear plant owners can’t get insurance; they can only operate because the U.S. government provides insurance on the taxpayer dime. The government also granted a ridiculously low cap on liability
- If we had no subsidies for nuclear, coal or oil, we’d have a clean energy economy right now

- We have 4 reactors in California – 2 at San Onofre 2 at San Luis Obispo – which are vulnerable to earthquakes and tsunamis.

No state or federal agency knows who would be in charge in case of an accident at Indian Point. It's like the Keystone Cops

Rolling Stone [writes](#):

The NRC has long served as little more than a lap dog to the nuclear industry, unwilling to crack down on unsafe reactors. "The agency is a wholly owned subsidiary of the nuclear power industry," says Victor Gilinsky, who served on the commission during the Three Mile Island meltdown in 1979. Even President Obama denounced the NRC during the 2008 campaign, calling it a "moribund agency that needs to be revamped and has become captive of the industries that it regulates."

In the years ahead, nuclear experts warn, the consequences of the agency's inaction could be dire. "The NRC has consistently put industry profits above public safety," says Arnie Gundersen, a former nuclear executive turned whistle-blower. "Consequently, we have a dozen Fukushimas waiting to happen in America."

Certainly the World Health Organization is a neutral voice?

One would think so. But as physician Helen Caldicott [points out](#):

There is widespread confusion about the roles of the World Health Organisation and the International Atomic Energy Commission. Monbiot expresses surprise that a UN-affiliated body such as WHO might be under the influence of the nuclear power industry, causing its reporting on nuclear power matters to be biased. And yet that is precisely the case.

In the early days of nuclear power, WHO issued forthright statements on radiation risks, such as its 1956 warning: "Genetic heritage is the most precious property for human beings. It determines the lives of our progeny, health and harmonious development of future generations. As experts, we affirm that the health of future generations is threatened by increasing development of the atomic industry and sources of radiation."

After 1959, the organisation made no more statements on health and radioactivity.

What happened?

On May 28, 1959, at the 12th World Health Assembly, WHO drew up an agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency. A clause of this agreement says the WHO effectively grants the right of prior approval over any research it might undertake or report on to the IAEA – a group that many people, including journalists, think is a neutral watchdog, but which is, in fact, an advocate for the nuclear power industry. Its founding papers state: "The agency shall seek to accelerate and enlarge the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity through the world."

The WHO's subjugation to the IAEA is widely known within the scientific radiation community, something which Monbiot chose to ignore. But it is clearly not the only matter on which he is ignorant, after his recent apparent

three-day perusal of the vast body of scientific information on radiation and radioactivity. The confusion that he and other nuclear industry apologists sow about radiation risks is very similar to the way that the tobacco industry propounded misinformation and lies about the true effects of smoking.

Despite their claims, it is they, not the "anti-nuclear movement", who are "misleading the world about the impacts of radiation on human health".

Radiation expert Dr. Christopher Busby [agrees](#):

The last thing [proponents of nuclear weapons and nuclear energy] wanted was the doctors and epidemiologists stopping their fun. The IAEA and the World Health Organisation (WHO) signed an agreement in 1959 to remove all research into the issue from the doctors of the WHO, to the atom scientists, the physicists of the IAEA: this agreement is still in force. The UN organisations do not refer to, or cite any scientific study, which shows their statements on Chernobyl to be false. There is a huge gap between the picture painted by the UN, the IAEA, the ICRP and the real world. And the real world is increasingly being studied and reports are being published in the scientific literature: but none of the authorities responsible for looking after the public take any notice of this evidence.

Similarly, the International Commission on Radiological Protection is tied to the nuclear industry. As I [noted](#) last month:

The Townsend Letter for Doctors & Patients [wrote](#) in 2002:

One of the original five 'health physicists' to set radiation safety standards was Karl Z. Morgan. Dr. Morgan served on the International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP), which set up most radiation standards. He also directed the Health Physics Division at Oak Ridge from 1944 until his retirement in 1972. In recent years, Dr. Morgan has publicly criticized the ICRP for failing to protect human health. In a 1994 article for the American Journal of Industrial Medicine, Dr. Morgan wrote: "The period of atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons by the United States, the United Kingdom, France and the USSR is a sad page in the history of civilized man. Without question, it was the cause of hundreds of thousands of cancer deaths. Yet there was complete silence on the part of the ICRP. During these years (1960-1965), most members of the ICRP either worked directly with the nuclear weapons industry or indirectly received most of their funding for their research from this industry."

The ICRP's alliance with the nuclear industry includes ties to the International Congress of Radiology. In his 1999 autobiography, *The Angry Genie: One Man's Walk Through the Nuclear Age* (ISBN 0-8061-3122-5), Dr. Morgan related his concern about the ICRP's refusal to address the danger of excessive X-ray exposure during diagnostic procedures and dentistry. Until the passage of the Radiation Control for Health and Safety Act of 1968, some X-ray equipment used in the 1950s and 1960s delivered 2 to 3 rem per X-ray. X-ray doses as low as 1.6 rem increase a woman's chance of developing cancer, according to a 1974 study by Baruch Modan [*Lancet* (Feb. 23,1974), pp 277-279]. The Act did not address the cumulative effect of multiple, routine, and often unnecessary X-

rays.

The [EPA](#) and [FDA](#) are playing politics with radiation. Indeed, Forbes' blogger [Jeff McMahon](#) and Truthout writer [Mike Ludwig](#) both note that FDA radiation standards for milk and other foods are 200 times higher than EPA standards for drinking water, and are based more on commercial than safety concerns.

Indeed, [governments have been covering up nuclear meltdowns for fifty years to protect the nuclear power industry.](#)

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