

Reject Nuclear Power - Here's Why

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Theme: [Environment](#), [Oil and Energy](#)

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Citizens do not want nuclear power¹. They know it is both far too dangerous and far too expensive.

Politicians want nuclear power because they know it puts Power in their hands. This is exactly paralleled by politicians embracing nuclear weapons. They think it gives them power and this is what they want above all else.

Citizens do not want nuclear weapons because they know they are insanely dangerous and what they want is to live without the threat of sudden and complete annihilation hanging over them and their children at all times. As we will see there is a close relationship between the weapons and the power in every sense of the word.

Politicians have different agendas to the people on these issues. The remedy is for us to wise up, get organised and then instruct them to do what we want – or join the job market.

The main objections to nuclear power are outlined below under the following headings:

- Nuclear power stations are prohibitively dangerous
- Nuclear power stations are prohibitively expensive
- Nuclear power stations use the same technology as that required to manufacture nuclear weapons
- The resulting nuclear waste will be dangerous for thousands of years
- Plant and waste deposit storage are vulnerable to terrorist attack
- Nuclear power stations epitomise the centralisation of power
- Poor countries are made dependent on rich ones
- These plants draw funds away from the development of sustainable energy
- The uranium fuel will become increasingly scarce.
- The support of nuclear power by government results from special pleading lobbying by the industry.

These aspects are briefly expanded upon below.

Nuclear power stations are prohibitively dangerous

There have now been four grave nuclear reactor accidents: Windscale in Britain in 1957 (the one that is never mentioned), Three Mile Island in the United States in 1979, Chernobyl in the Soviet Union in 1986, and now Fukushima. Each accident was unique, and each was supposed to be impossible.

A recent book, Chernobyl: Consequences of the Catastrophe for People and the Environment, concludes that, based on records now available, some 985,000 people died

between 1986 and 2004, mainly of cancer, as a result of the Chernobyl accident.

Alice Slater, New York representative of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, comments:

“The tragic news uncovered by comprehensive new research that almost one million people died in the toxic aftermath of Chernobyl should be a wake-up call to people all over the world to petition their governments to put a halt to the current industry-driven ‘nuclear renaissance.’ Aided by a corrupt IAEA, the world has been subjected to a massive cover-up and deception about the true damages caused by Chernobyl.”

At Fukushima we have the worst industrial disaster ever. Three simultaneous ongoing complete meltdowns have proven impossible to stop or contain since they started almost 2 years ago. These meltdowns are still pouring radiation pollution across the Japanese landscape.

International experts agree that there will continue to be disastrous failures at nuclear power stations and that this cannot be avoided².

As Edward Teller, the great nuclear physicist, said, ‘If you [try to] construct something foolproof, there will always be a fool greater than the proof,’

Nuclear power stations are prohibitively expensive

Nuclear power stations are so expensive that they are never built without substantial contribution to their costs from citizens in the form of subsidies.

The UK government has said it will not subsidize new nuclear power stations. However this seems to refer to the most overt form of subsidies and not to ‘hidden ‘ subsidies.

Nuclear power stations are so dangerous that no insurance company will undertake to pay the total costs of a disaster or a terrorist attack. So in order to get them built the government has to limit liability. This is a subsidy.

The cost of decommissioning will be an enormous sum and the final total is unknown.

Any limitation to liability for decommissioning costs will be a subsidy. If the industry does not pay the total costs of disposing of nuclear waste and ensuring it is safe for thousand of years then this is a subsidy. The industry does not pay the total costs of all research into nuclear energy .This is a subsidy.

Nuclear power stations use the same technology as that required to manufacture nuclear weapons

Any country which purifies uranium for use in nuclear power stations can also use its purification plant to manufacture weapons grade fissile material.

Already nuclear power development has been used repeatedly as a cover for developing nuclear weapons. Of the 10 nations which have developed nuclear weapons ‘six did so with political cover and/or technical support from their supposedly peaceful nuclear program -

India, Pakistan, Israel, South Africa, North Korea and France' ³.

The resulting nuclear waste will be dangerous for thousands for years

Since nuclear waste will be dangerous for thousands of years⁴ we are dumping our energy problems on future generations instead of using the benign methods of creating energy which are available to us.

The currently favoured 'solution' of burying the waste in bedrock and sealing off access for ever is desperate and irresponsible.

The plants and waste deposit storage are vulnerable to terrorist attack

Because of their destructive potential nuclear power stations are a major target for terrorists. The 9/11 atrocity would be tiny by comparison. If a large plane were flown into a nuclear power station the disaster would be immeasurably worse than Chernobyl.

John Large, an international expert on nuclear power, has said that if a plane was flown into the nuclear waste storage tanks at Sellafield the whole of the English Midlands could be catastrophically contaminated.

Safety studies of Sellafield carried out for local authorities tell us that a direct hit by a passenger jet on the Sellafield nuclear reprocessing plant would contaminate Britain with two and a half times more radioactivity than the amount that escaped during the Chernobyl disaster⁵.

The studies also inform us that up to 2,646lb of the highly radioactive and long-lasting isotope caesium-137 would be released into the atmosphere, contaminating Britain, Ireland, continental Europe and beyond, making swathes of the country uninhabitable and causing more than two million cancers.

In the light of the twin towers atrocity this is a completely unacceptable risk.

They epitomise the centralisation of power

There is a burgeoning awareness among citizens that they are more free and more in control of their lives if facilities and decision-making occur at local level; that Big Government should only control those matters which cannot be dealt with locally. Nuclear power is the ultimate way of centralising power, putting it in the hands of experts, multi-national corporations and Big Government. In complete contrast to this, benign methods of supplying power such as wind and water turbines, solar energy, and heat pumps can be in the control of local communities and even, for some provisions, households.

Poor countries are made dependent on rich ones

Poor countries do not have the knowledge and facilities to design, build, maintain and run their own nuclear power stations. This puts them at the mercy of the rich and more technically advanced states if they go down the nuclear power route.

Technically less advanced countries with nuclear power stations increases the safety risks. As Professor Peter Bradford writes

'A world more reliant on nuclear power would involve many plants in countries that have little experience with nuclear energy, no regulatory background in the field, and some questionable records on quality control, safety and corruption'⁶.

By adopting benign forms of power supply the UK could help to promote the people-friendly way forward.

These plants draw funds away from the development of sustainable energy

Research undertaken and funds spent on nuclear power are highly detrimental to bringing forward sustainable energy supplies.

Each nuclear power plant costs around £5 billion to build. With such sums available we could quickly realise our sustainable energy potential. As Friends of the Earth tell us 'With some of the windiest weather in Europe and almost 8.000 miles of coastline, the UK is a power house waiting to be switched on'⁷.

The uranium fuel will become increasingly scarce.

The quantity of available uranium is limited and will reduce. The price will go up. If the world adopts nuclear power as a major source of energy there will be uranium wars just as there are now oil wars. There are unlikely to be wars fought over sustainable locally generated, solar, wind or wave power.

Thomas Neff, a research affiliate at MIT's Center for International Studies writes

'..shortage of uranium and of processing facilities worldwide leaves a gap between the potential increase in demand for nuclear energy and the ability to supply fuel for it'⁸

The support of nuclear power by government results from special pleading lobbying by the industry.

The adoption of nuclear power is favoured by the government but in a referendum would be rejected by citizens as being too dangerous and too expensive. A major reason that government favours this form seems to be due to vast amounts of money and effort being put into lobbying by the power companies. Their profits are huge so they have the funds for lobbying whereas the NGOs and citizens at large who are against nuclear power and have overwhelming arguments do not make the same impact because they lack the funds for effective lobbying.

This is one tendency which we are trying to help counter by this article!

Notes

1 'Nuclear power 'gets little public support worldwide' - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-15864806>

2. Charles Perrow, 'Normal Accidents', Basic Books, 1984.

3. Article 'Nuclear power and nuclear weapons are two sides of the same coin' - article republished from Chain Reaction #115, August 2012 by Jim Green - the national nuclear campaigner with Friends of the Earth, Australia.

4. http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/nuclear_power_answer_climate_change.pdf

5 .

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/1359081/Passenger-jet-hit-on-Sellafield-would-dwarf-Chernobyl-fall-out.html>

A report by The Independent's Technology Correspondent, Robert Uhlig, Published: 12:01AM BST 11 Oct 2001) was headed Passenger jet hit on Sellafield 'would dwarf Chernobyl fall-out'

6.' Nuclear Power - Costly and Dangerous' By Peter A. Bradford, an adjunct professor at the Vermont Law School and former commissioner of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission

7. http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/factsheets/renewable_energy.pdf

8. <http://web.mit.edu/newsoffice/2007/fuel-supply.html>

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