

Nuclear Wastes

Even if nuclear power is cheaper than other methods of generating, and it is; even if it is environmentally cleaner, and it is; even if it is healthier, and it is; what about nuclear wastes?

Disposal of these wastes is a problem, but scientists have solved it. Only government red tape keeps the solution from being put into practice more quickly. If all of our power were generated by nuclear energy, the total wastes would equal the size of an aspirin tablet for each person per year. Wastes can be vitrified - turned into glassy solids - sealed in cement and steel, and safely buried in deep geological formations. The Swiss have developed greater refinements we can use as well, if government regulations can be loosened. Coal-fired plants, by comparison, produce 320 pounds of poisonous wastes per person, per year, 32 pounds of which are discharged into the air.

If all our power were produced by nuclear, total wastes for the next three and a half centuries would fit into a cube 200 feet on a side; yet this is a problem the Naders and Fondas claim our technology cannot solve.

Why Three Mile Island?

Was the incredible chain of events at Three Mile Island accidental, or could it have been deliberate?

Certainly, the anti-nuclear and anti-capitalist zealots are capable of sabotage. A group of English scientists say they have proof that the Soviet Union, which has its own extensive nuclear power program, is financing anti-nuclear groups to cripple the West, since the Communists know that only nuclear power can take the place of our more vulnerable oil.

There was one interesting coincidence at Three Mile Island. In the summer of 1978, a leftist Harrisburg magazine - funded by a Federal grant - published a fictional article about a series of accidents at Three Mile Island, culminating in a melt-down. The melt-down didn't occur, of course, but the other parts of the story were similar to actual events. In the article, the problems began on March 28th. And the real incident started on -- March 28th.

The Free Market

Nuclear power is one of our most regulated industries, and this has raised costs tremendously, as well as delayed new con-

struction. But all these regulations didn't prevent the accident at Three Mile Island. In fact, they may have made it worse.

The Nuclear Regulatory Agency, like OSHA and similar bodies, neither achieves its goals nor has a Constitutional basis. But without the NRC, how could we be sure about safety? If any regulation is necessary, it should be handled on a state level. But I believe that the free market would ensure safety, if we repealed another subsidy - the Price-Anderson Act.

Under this law, two pools of private insurance companies provide up to \$140 million in coverage per incident for nuclear plants. The government provides coverage above that, with liability limited to \$560 million. Insurance for nuclear plants, and for everything else, should be handled in the free market. Not only would this save the taxpayers money, but it would be a means of providing safety checks for plants. No pool of private insurance companies would provide hundreds of millions of dollars in coverage without being sure that the plants were safe. And no businessmen would want to run anything but safe and efficient plants, since it would be unprofitable to do otherwise.

Nuclear Power and Totalitarianism

Samuel McCracken points out that over 500 Americans died in 1838 alone because of steam accidents - a rate equivalent to 7000 with today's population. But there was no movement, led by a 19th century Ralph Nader, calling for a moratorium on the development of steam power. Such a moratorium, says Professor McCracken, "would have prevented the deaths of some thousands in steam explosions, and would have assured the deaths of many thousands more through a halt to the industrial revolution."

The industrial revolution, better called the capitalist revolution, has been slowed by government intervention. If we want to keep a free and productive society, we need to get government out of all aspects of energy.

Says John Hospers: "There is hardly a surer way to turn the United States into a totalitarian state than by drying up its sources of energy. There are abundant sources of fossil energy, but the government is regulating these industries to death. That leaves only nuclear. But once people have had the hell scared out of them by threats of disasters in nuclear plants, that leaves nothing - no energy, no more production, no more wealth - only massive starvation and passive ants in an inert anthill controlled by the regulators enforcing universal poverty from above."