RAS #AA-16

Hearing Docket

From: gordon woodcock [grw33@comcast.net]
Sent: Monday, August 11, 2008 8:17 PM
To: Paul Bollwerk; Hearing Docket
Subject: Docket No. 52-014--COL and 52-15-COL (Bellefonte)

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OFFICE OF SECRETARY
RULEMAKINGS AND
ADJUDICATIONS STAFF

Docket No. 52-014-COL and 52-015-COL

Limited Appearance

Bellefonte Nuclear Plants Units 3 and 4

Docket No. 52-014--COL and 52-15-COL

Comments from Gordon Woodcock

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Who I am: Trained in nuclear engineering in the 1960s, (MSNucE UW Seattle 1965), became anti-nuclear because our social and political systems are unable to safely and prudently manage such a complex and dangerous source of energy.

Uranium mining is a dirty business; it leaves low-level radioactive tailings, spoiling the land, and miners are exposed to ingestion of uranium and its decay products. While alpha emitters like uranium are sometimes viewed as not especially dangerous, their ingestion into the lungs carries a high cancer risk.

While there are no immediate or mid-term shortage issues, uranium is a rare resource subject to the volatility of the market; its price cannot be predicted any more than oil prices have been predictable. In the long term, usable supplies will run out, especially if many more plants are constructed.

Plant design, construction and operation is expensive, takes a long time (which makes need for the power difficult to predict), and incurs high financial costs. It is vital that everything be done right, and quality control and rework are expensive.

The probability of accidents is demonstrably low; the only serious one was Chernobyl, using a reactor type not permitted in the West. However, there is a risk that a serious design or construction process flaw revealed after a number of new-design plants are built would require them all to shut down for fix and cause a major energy shortage.

Because nuclear plants are so expensive, wind energy is cheaper and much faster to build and cheaper to run. There are good wind resources in the TVA region. Utilities that have invested in nuclear power have had to raise rates to pay for the plants (even if they are completed, and some are not). Solar is about on a par with nuclear costs now, and unlike nuclear power the construction cost is continuing to drop.

Reasonable subsidies to consumers in the form of tax credits, and surplus buy-back (which TVA currently does) will induce consumers to pay the bulk of up-front cost for solar and wind generation, and such point-of-use generation does not have distribution losses and decreases the load on the distribution system.

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Nuclear plants are very tempting targets for terrorists. Any coordinated attack would cause powerplant shutdowns and energy shortages. While a reactor containment vessel is very unlikely to be breached, nuclear powerplants have on-site spent fuel storage (because there is no solution to high-level waste disposal, and spent fuel is very hard to move until it decays to the point of no longer being spontaneously flammable). The spent fuel storage is vulnerable to attack such as by an aircraft crash and a successful attack would create a radiological disaster of major proportions.

High-level nuclear waste … there is no politically acceptable solution. Nobody wants it in their state. While the waste decays continuously, some of the radioactive isotopes will persist for longer than modern humans have inhabited the Earth.

Any civilization that is willing to use DU in weapons, ostensibly merely for its high density and resulting penetrating power, when it is a radioactive (apha emitter) material that burns when used on the battlefield, spreading radioactive dust that can be ingested, is not responsible enough to manage nuclear power.

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