

# Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism

UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS - CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS  
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איחוד  
ליהדות  
מונקדרכנות  
באמריקה

July 5, 1979

Dr. Joseph Hendrie, Chair  
Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Dr. Hendrie:

The development of alternate sources of energy is a moral issue of tremendous concern to the Jewish community.

Events at Three-Mile Island impelled the Board of Trustees of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations to reassess our position on nuclear energy. Precisely because of a religious commitment to the preservation of the earth and all its resources; to the protection of human life from possible threat to physical or mental health, the Board resolved, on May 20, 1979, "that any further expansion of nuclear energy should await a resolution of presently unanswered questions regarding safety and nuclear waste disposal. We further call for immediate intensification of current investigations and efforts to increase security and safety in current operations..."

The Board, representing 1.2 million Reform Jews, also reiterated an earlier plea "for the United States to undertake a crash program of development and storage of alternative renewable sources - in particular, solar - as well as to develop hydro-electric power and to utilize gasohol and other substitutes as quickly as possible."

We are calling your attention to this resolution (copy enclosed) which also addresses the problems of oil decontrol, the resultant impact on the poor and elderly, the question of windfall profits tax and conservation as a method of reducing U.S. dependence on OPEC oil, so that you may be aware of these concerns as you consider future decisions regarding any aspect of the energy crisis.

Cordially,

*Annette Daum*  
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Religious Action Consultant

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ADAPTED BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

of the

UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS

May 20, 1979

New York, New York

ENERGY

In a resolution adopted in June, 1978, in New York City, the UAMC Board of Trustees recognized the urgency of the energy crisis and stated that "the priorities of a national energy policy should be conservation and development of renewable alternative resources as a means of achieving self-sufficiency for our energy needs."

Now, one year later, it is clear that the United States has failed to achieve these purposes, even though it is increasingly evident that the development of a fair, just and effective energy policy is essential to the economic and social well-being of our country, to our national security, to the maintenance of an independent American foreign policy and to world stability.

In assessing energy policies, our guide should be concern for the protection of human life from hazards which may threaten health or well-being; concern for the environment; concern for future generations and their genetic integrity; fair and equitable distribution of energy resources, both among people and countries.

In keeping with our previous positions and with these ethical values, the UAMC Board of Trustees, meeting in New York City on May 20, 1979, makes the following additional recommendations:

1/ We continue to believe that conservation represents the most acceptable and practical method of reducing our dependence on foreign oil and preserving non-renewable resources for the future. Profligate waste of energy in America is a moral scandal and a national challenge. We, therefore, call upon the federal, state and local governments and all citizens to adopt and fund serious programs of conservation and public awareness of energy usage, including such essential components as a high-priority improvement in, and in usage of, mass transit.

2/ In accordance with the recommendations adopted in 1978, we call upon the appropriate commissions and departments within the UAMC and other bodies in Reform Judaism to provide specific guidance to our congregations and congregants on how to utilize an energy audit and other means to reduce energy consumed, wherever feasible by retrofitting structures and - in building new structures - incorporating energy efficient techniques.

We request the Chairman of the Board of Trustees to appoint a special committee to undertake a study of what progress is made in the congregations, camps and other facilities of Reform Judaism to achieve significant energy reductions, aiming for a 10% reduction in energy use, and to report back to this Board at our spring, 1980, meeting.

3/ The United States should act aggressively to lessen the monopolistic impact of OPEC's control of the price and quantity of world oil by undertaking needed steps to achieve increased exploration and development of oil throughout the world and specifically to expedite oil from Alaska and to overcome the political, technological and economic constraints on energy trade with Mexico.

4/ We are deeply concerned about Administration proposals to decontrol domestic oil. Rising prices, which would accompany decontrol, have not yet proved to be either an effective means of encouraging conservation or of assuring the production of new oil. Moreover, decontrol would lift the price of domestic oil to the artificially high world oil prices set by the OPEC cartel. Such a rise would gravely aggravate the inflation which threatens the economic stability of our country. Clearly the poor and elderly will be devastated by such soaring prices. For these reasons, we oppose decontrol.

By the Administration's own admission, its proposed Energy Security Fund, to be created by the windfall profits tax, even if adopted by Congress, would not adequately achieve its stated purpose.

5/ We reiterate our earlier plea for the United States to undertake a crash program of development and storage of alternative renewable energy sources - in particular, solar - as well as to develop hydro-electric power and to utilize gasohol and other substitutes as quickly as possible.

6/ The recent near-disaster at Three Mile Island, and related events now coming to light, have provoked profound concern and has resulted in a justifiable reassessment of the safety and future of nuclear energy. We, therefore, believe that any further expansion of nuclear energy should await a resolution of presently unanswered questions regarding safety and nuclear waste disposal. We further call for immediate intensification of current investigations and efforts to increase security and safety in current operations, and for a moratorium on overseas exports of nuclear plants pending resolution of security questions.

7/ We have great confidence in the wisdom of a fully informed electorate. We view the lack of general public support for the type of measures we have proposed as being due, in large measure, to the confusion, misinformation, half-truths and conflicting statements from all levels of our government and industry on this issue of vital national concern. We urge all our government institutions now to present the energy issue to the American people with candor and objectivity, and we know that the American people will respond in the highest tradition of our democratic system.