

United States Senate

Washington, D. C., October 15, 1976

*Respectfully referred to*

Congressional Liaison  
Nuclear Regulatory Com.

I would appreciate a review of the matter described in the attached letter. Please send me an appropriate report and return the correspondence.

Thank you,

OFF. FILE  
Date 10/19/76  
Time 11:00

*Robert P. Griffin*  
ROBERT P. GRIFFIN

U. S. S.

Form No. 3

16-48102-3 GPO

8007151083

Oct. 12, 1976

Dear Mrs. Griffin

Recently on TV one of our Representatives gave his whole hearted support to Nuclear plants, especially to the one built in Midland. This is a brave gesture, especially when a person lives a thousand miles away from the problem. This is a common action taken by those who spend 95% of their efforts serving special interest groups.

A letter recently taken from the files of Detroit Edison states there is no such thing as building a safe Nuclear plant. It is also stated that a burn-out would destroy an area the size of Pennsylvania. We have had two such close accidents in our State. Consumers Power are presently

using engineers, contractors and suppliers for shoddy work and materials. This is common knowledge, and yet the same procedure is being used in the Midland plant as was used in the South Haven plant. And there have been 22 incidents of poor workmanship on the Midland plant. And still Consumers Power are allowed to build this dangerous plant within our city limits. No Nuclear plant should be built anywhere without a vote of the people. No Nuclear waste should be buried beneath our State without their vote, and no Naval signaling station should be built without the vote of the people in the Upper Peninsula. And the dumping of waste into Lake Superior by a mining company should be stopped.

Big businesses have polluted  
every river and lake in Michigan to  
the point where the fish, birds, and  
cattle are polluted severely.

Our Representatives are well covered  
by lobbyists, too well. And Jimmy  
Carter is nailing their hide to the  
wall.

What is your opinion?

Neil D. Brown

1331 Bookness St.

Midland, Mich.

48640

# Plunge into Plutonium Era Could Be a Disaster

BY ROBERT KLEIMAN  
New York Times News Service

NEW YORK — A high-level study of national and international nuclear energy policy ordered by President Ford during the summer has evidently brought him divided counsel on the most critical problem: whether to speed the United States and the world toward a "plutonium economy." Nevertheless, a crash decision to move toward common use of plutonium as a fuel in nuclear power reactors seems to be in the making, despite likely criticism from Jimmy Carter.

The key issue is whether to begin early commercial-scale reprocessing of plutonium at a giant South Carolina plant, under construction for several years but now stalled. Deferral of a decision — at least until the next administration, but preferably for several years of research into alternative technologies — evidently is favored by only a minority of Ford's advisers. But they make a strong case that deferral could do no harm and might save mankind from a plunge into disaster.

"That doesn't mean stop. It means, for heaven's sake, stop to think," as the chairman of Britain's Royal Commission on Nuclear Energy said after a report warning of the dangers of a plutonium economy.

Virtually all the world's civilian power reactors now burn slightly enriched or natural uranium fuel, which cannot be exploded. Plutonium, a man-made element, is also usable as a fuel, but a quantity small enough to be carried in one hand could be made relatively easily into a bomb that could destroy a city.

Enough plutonium for 1,000 bombs a year is now being produced by nuclear power reactors outside the United States and Russia, a figure that will be tripled in third-world countries alone in the 1980s. But for the moment, the world's rapidly growing supply of plutonium is not easily available for fuel or weapons use.

To extract this plutonium economically from radioactive reactor wastes and to fabricate so poisonous a substance into new fuel rods requires a giant chemical reprocessing complex, operated by remote control and capable of servicing 30 to 50 reactors. No such commercial-size reprocessing complex exists now anywhere in the world; spent reactor fuel rods are being stored everywhere for possible future use.

The majority view expressed by the president's study group is that the stalled South Carolina reprocessing facility, which awaits licensing by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, should be speeded to completion as a "demonstration

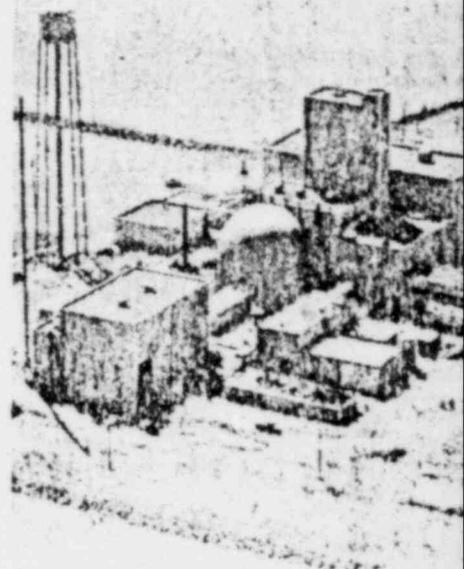
plant" to test the economics of plutonium recycling as well as health, safety and environmental precautions.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission, after a three-year study, has just held that the use of plutonium as a fuel need not pose unacceptable risks to health, safety and the environment if adequate precautions are taken.

But it is still holding up an operating license for the South Carolina plant out of concern that it would trigger plutonium reprocessing around the world before creation of effective safeguards against the spread of national and subnational nuclear weapons capability. A stockpile of separated plutonium could be made into bombs by almost any determined government or terrorist group in a matter of days or weeks.

Jimmy Carter has just called again for American efforts to achieve a worldwide moratorium on export of reprocessing plants. He has urged a go-slow policy toward even an internationally controlled demonstration plant.

The problem is too critical — and too technical — to be judged in the heat of a presidential campaign. Ford would be well-advised to take the issue out of the campaign by deferring the decision on plutonium reprocessing until the next administration.



Enough plutonium for 25 or more Hiroshima-sized bombs is produced annually with spent fuel rods of a 1,000-megawatt nuclear power reactor.