

In recent correspondence with your Editor, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Samuel R. Pierce, Jr., questions the "desirability of additional Federal involvement and support for...conservation and...solar energy." If solar and conservation don't need Federal help, then why, after 40 years of heavy military and civilian subsidies (nearly \$40 billion, says the DOE Bowring Report) does nuclear? Since the Arab oil embargo, Americans have slowly begun that shift in public opinion that precedes any major societal change. The Reagan Administration's reversal in priorities comes at that very moment when "thinking about" the transition to renewables is about to become "doing something about it." The loss of the programs destined to be cut may kill the opportunity to move the nation onto the "soft energy path" entirely.

Sources: Solar Lobby and Environmental Policy Center Alerts, April, 1981

Congress Acting on Deadly Licensing Riders to NRC Supplemental Appropriations Bill

As ECNP News goes to press, the Congressional House Appropriations Committee has passed riders that would require citizen intervenors to show cause with "affidavits of fact" before their contentions would be admitted in an NRC license proceeding. Equally ominous for public safety is a rider that would prevent anyone except formal parties from raising issues in a proceeding (that's a regulatory change that NRC has also proposed; see March ECNP News). Even the Licensing Board composed of supposedly knowledgeable experts would be prevented from examining safety and environmental issues that might have been "overlooked" by the NRC Staff or a utility. A third broad rider would prevent examination at an operating license stage of changes in the financial condition of a utility or any other issues previously considered in construction permit hearings. These riders had been added in a closed session of the Subcommittee. They are tantamount to excluding citizen participation in reactor licensing. They go to the full house this week.

Sources: Washington Post, April 30, p. A-15; Sierra Club Energy Chairperson; Union of Concerned Scientists

TMI-1 Restart Hearings Creak On

Following NRC's decision that Three Mile Island Unit 1 will not be returned to full service until the Restart hearings are finished, ASLB Chairman Ivan Smith cranked up the pace in April, going to 5 and 6-day weeks. Although NRC and Met Ed have plenty of attorneys and witnesses to bear the accelerated burden, intervenors do not. The grueling schedule forced the Union of Concerned Scientists to withdraw from daily participation and drop contentions months ago. Gail Bradford of A.N.G.R.Y. (and an ECNP Board member) has led cross-examination on the 100+ evacuation contentions.

Dr. Bruce Molholt, a geneticist with the Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia, submitted testimony on ECNP's contentions pertaining to fetal sensitivity to radioactive Iodine-131 and on inadequacies of monitoring to register the full exposure the public would receive during the early stages of an accident, before the EPA's Protective Action Guideline level would be reached. At Met Ed's insistence, the Licensing Board struck those portions of Dr. Molholt's testimony that dealt with radiation synergisms in causing somatic (e.g., cancers) and genetic effects. The Board also struck his testimony on the cumulative impacts of doses received during the TMI-2 accident and on studies revealing radioactive iodine uptake in the thyroids of field rodents near TMI. Molholt had shown that animal thyroids are a much more sensitive monitor than cow's milk (used by the Commonwealth). The Board deleted those portions as irrelevant and unreliable.

In perhaps the most moving testimony to date, TMI area farmers Paul Lytle, Vance and Jeremy Fischer described the losses they incurred during the TMI accident and showed that the State's agricultural emergency response plans are totally unworkable. [For a brief moment, Truth glowed brilliantly in the NRC hearing room. Ed]