

50-205

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4-to-1 PUC Vote

Bodega Plant Foes Lose Another Plea

SF Chronicle 5/22/64

Opponents of a nuclear reactor at Bodega Head lost another round before the State Public Utilities Commission yesterday, but were treated in defeat to a blisteringly sarcastic attack on the PG&E by the Commission president.

By a vote of 4-to-1, the Commission decided to refuse another hearing to the anti-reactor forces on the grounds they had nothing substantially new to add to their previous testimony.

President William M. Bennett, in a dissenting opinion, said the utilities company is responsible for Alice-in-Wonderland thinking that "is being spoon fed to the public against all warnings of reason, logic, experience and common sense."

QUAKE

"In my judgment, this Commission is compelled to open the Bodega proceedings and the reason is simple—the fact of the Alaska earthquake."

He said he found it significant that Pacific Gas & Electric Company had sent experts to the scene of the Alaskan quakes last March to examine conditions there in connection with the situation at Bodega Head—which is beside the San Andreas fault.

"I am quite concerned that some of the PG&E experts may have changed positions," he said.

"It has been said that the opponents of the Bodega plant are seizing upon the Alaska quakes to exploit their case in opposition to Bodega and logically it would follow that such opponents may have caused the Alaska quakes for this purpose.

POSITIONS

"Despite mounting concern on the part of the public, we have now advanced from the proposition that earthquakes may be the cause of only slight concern to the Proposi-

ideal locations for nuclear plants."

A PG&E spokesman said "today's action was about the sixth time the commission has reconsidered the matter."

"In only two of its decisions has there been a single dissenting vote. This certainly is an indication that the commission has decided quite firmly that its original approval of the plant was proper."

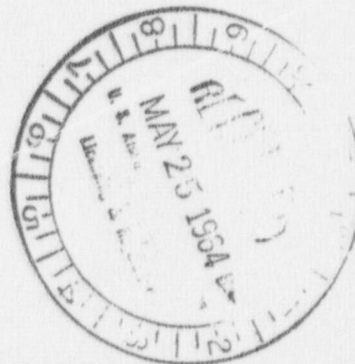
SF Examiner 5/22/64 PUC Won't

Re-open the Bodega Case

The Public Utilities Commission refused for the fourth time yesterday to re-open the case for the proposed Pacific Gas and Electric Co. nuclear power plant at Bodega Bay.

The decision was immediately blasted by Commission president William M. Bennett, who cast the only dissenting vote in the 4-1 decision.

The vote followed a recent petition for re-opening presented by the Northern California Chapter of the Committee to Preserve Bodega Bay and Harbor. The committee asked for a re-evaluation of safety factors in view of the Alaskan earthquakes.



San Rosa Press Democrat 5/20/64

A-Plant 'Hazards'

Argued at SF Hearing

By DON ENGDAIL
P. D. Staff Writer

SAN FRANCISCO — Another scene in the controversy over the Bodega Head nuclear-fueled power plant proposal was played out here yesterday before a San Francisco Supervisors' committee.

On stage were experts from both sides, who again disagreed over factors bearing on the safety of the Pacific Gas & Electric Co. proposal.

The audience had standing room only—about 100 persons packed the room where the three-man committee on county, state and national affairs held the hearing.

The committee is considering a resolution proposed by Supervisor Jack Morrison that the city take a position opposing the plant proposal.

Committee member William C. Blake indicated he was ready to move on the spot to

forward an amendment to the supervisors that would put the city in favor of the plant. That,
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10—Press Democrat, Santa Rosa, Calif., Wed., May 20, 1964

A-Plant 'Hazards'

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he said, would result in a clear-cut decision one way or another.

But chairman Roger Boas said he'd need a week to study evidence presented yesterday and at an earlier hearing, and the third man—Supervisor Leo McCarthy—said it would take him "weeks" to reach a decision.

Technical Testimony

Yesterday's hearing was for the purpose of taking technical testimony and most of the three-hour session was devoted to presentation of cases by PG&E and the Northern California Association to Preserve Bodega Head & Harbor.

Association executive secretary David Pesonen said the opponents view the possible dangers of the proposed reactor as "so far beyond the range of normal experience that greater attention than usual" must be given to site safety.

Yesterday association witnesses dealt primarily with the ground under the reactor—the site itself—and the air above it. — meteorological conditions that would disperse radioactive materials in the event of an accident and rupture of the re-

actor containment.

Dr. James E. McDonald, senior physicist at the University of Arizona's Institute of Atmospheric Physics, found it "incredible" that the plant is proposed to be located near the San Andreas Fault in "a climatology... as bad as would be hard to find."

Wind directions and persistent low-level inversion conditions would mean, Dr. McDonald said, that plant discharges would be confined and sent easterly to Santa Rosa and Petaluma on 70 per cent of summer days and to San Francisco on 70 per cent of summer nights.

Atmospheric mixing would be better in the winter wet season, the physicist said, but "occurrence of frequent light drizzles and rains in the winter season implies high probability of rain washout of radioactivity and subsequent deposition on important milkshed areas of Marin and Sonoma counties."

He emphasized that more study is needed before "definitive predictions of all hazard potential can be made," expressed amazement that more studies have not been conducted, but said "I regard meteorological factors as peculiarly adverse."

Dr. McDonald was a relatively-new member of the opposition camp; also testifying yesterday was Dr. Pierre St-Amand, geologist and seismologist.

Dr. Saint-Amand, who a year ago called Bodega Head a "very poor" site, yesterday called it a "dangerous experiment" to place a reactor where he envisioned the possibility of earthquake movement on minor faults through the reactor site.

He said he was sure PG&E's

consultants could design a plant active fault... and there are to stand "shaking," but "I am fewer people around." not convinced it could withstand. Other Association testimony permanent dislocation of the fault."

The reactor site is to the side of the main San Andreas Fault zone. A point of geological controversy is whether a fault discovered in the reactor pit during excavation by PG&E is an "active" one — whether movement along that fault is to be expected during an earthquake along the main San Andreas Fault.

A consulting PG&E geologist, E. C. Marliave, testified later for the company and said flatly that the site is an "excellent location," said no movement on the site fault is expected, and flayed at some of his colleagues who disagree:

"We've all seen the same thing," he said, "some interpret it a little differently. When we are all on the stand under oath (at the Atomic Energy Commission hearings on the proposal) I expect these differences will be cleared up tremendous."

Another area of plant design that was focussed on was the utility company's Amendment Seven to its application to the AEC for permission to build the plant.

"That amendment suggests a 'design concept' involving floating the reactor structure on a layer of sand, surrounded by a layer of compressible material. It would, says PG&E, allow the movement (up to three feet) without impairing ability to shut it down."

Dr. Saint-Amand called that a "brilliant design," but "untested."

Under questioning by committee members, the seismologist said he thought a nuclear power plant would have suffered "practically nothing" in the way of damage if it had been in Alaska during the Good Friday earthquake if it had been designed for the type of soil found there.

In fact, he said, he would prefer to see the reactor near Anchorage than at Bodega Bay, because it is "further from an

any agencies and the "excellent safety record in the atomic industry."

The main gun was L. H. McEwen, manager of nuclear safety engineering of General Electric Co., San Jose—which would build the reactor.

Mr. McEwen testified at length about the safety of reactors in general and said there are 35 nuclear facilities in the state, including 13 in the Bay area.

He compared statistical hazards of atomic energy to that of commuting (and found commuting much more dangerous); said the design tends to make reactors self-limiting, and that the Bodega reactor would be able to stand repeated shocks of the magnitude of the 1906 earthquake.

The GE representative said only if the reactor vessel or related piping was breached, along with failure of standby safety devices, "do the necessary conditions exist for substantial release of fission products to the atmosphere."

Even then, he said, the natural sequence of events would limit the releases.

But: "We believe that in plants such as this the possibility of accidents with serious effect on the public is rendered virtually zero, and thus risks

to people are very small compared with the wide variety of other risks involved in everyday living."

Reactors are "no longer a novelty," Mr. McEwen said, and discounted concern over need for more experience.

Besides geologist Marliave, PG&E testimony included:

—Assurance from Dr. George W. Housner, consulting civil engineer who said the plant is designed to stand "a repetition of the 1906 shock every week without ill effect," and meet "the maximum credible ground shaking as estimated by seismologists with ample factor of safety."

With structural standards being applied, he said, the Bodega plant "will be the last building standing."

—Seismologist Dr. Hugo Benioff's declaration that it is "extremely unlikely" that any movement exceeding a fraction of an inch can take place "on 'minor fractures' such as the one found in the site 'within the foreseeable future.'"

The reactor can stand a movement of "two feet or so," he said, "which is greatly in excess of any movement that can occur there."

The PG&E consultant also said that the United States Geological Service, which had

earlier predicted movement of "a few feet" of Bodega Head rocks, has "restated its position... and is now much closer to our point of view."

After the experts, Chairman Boas called for limited audience comments; all but one

were opposed to the plant proposal. Among those recognized to speak was Rose Gaffney, long a colorful figure in the Bodega controversy, who declined to take two minutes because she said that wasn't enough.