

NEIS NEWS

Winter 2004

The Empire Strikes Back: Rough times ahead for safe energy?

By Dave Kraft, Director

As we go to press for the last time in 2004, much has changed in the energy world since we last wrote in summer.

"Black Tuesday" changed a lot of things, most for the worse on the energy front, we fear. One of the first things the previous Bush Administration did in 2001 was launch its "National Energy Tragedy" plans: more nuclear, more coal, more oil – and as quickly as possible. Fortunately, they failed after four years of trying, largely due to the razor thin margin by which they failed to control the Senate; and perhaps as much by the totally unreality and outrageousness of their goals, and the brutal Machiavellian pugnacity by which they attempted to force them on the country.

No such worries hamper the current Administration, which now has a firm grip on the White House and both Chambers of Congress. Worse, it would seem that the Age of Reason seemed to come to an abrupt, inglorious end, with a reported majority of the undercounted electorate seemingly in favor of the Administration and its rapacious, destructive environmental and energy policies.

The facts no longer mattered to voters. Our kids may come home in body bags by the hundreds, but they died fighting for our God(damn) given birthright to own a gas guzzling Humvee; global warming may continue to lurch towards an irreversible pattern just this side of the Day After Tomorrow; but at least those of the "Bush Mandate" stopped the godless fags from marrying. The Team that launched one of the worst environmental records in history has now been given an even stronger hand to continue – perhaps even institutionalize -- environmental suicide. Will enough lemmings recover in time to prevent D&D (Dubya and Darth) from leading the nation – and possibly the rest of the planet – over the environmental cliff? Will it matter if they try? Are we as a movement up to the task of the massive re-education challenge these results and this kind of non-thinking call for? Tune in....

In this issue, we review the accomplishments of 2004 as well as the bitter pill consequences of Black Tuesday and the issues ahead in 2005. In spite of the bleak prospects the election heralds, there are many fights ahead worth waging in 2005: stopping the Exelon plans for new reactors and achieving a renewable energy portfolio standard for Illinois among them. The NPCH Conference held in Chicago in mid-October rejuvenated the safe-energy and anti-nuclear movements in the region, and forged new relationships and alliances. Creative plans flowed from the meeting.

Sometimes the darkest hour is truly always just before the dawn.

-- Dave Kraft, Hamburg --

Ending the "Nuclear Renaissance"

By Marylee Maloney, NEIS

The **Nuclear Power and Children's Health** conference held in Chicago, October 15-16, 2004, was a rousing success, attended by over 250 people from 15 states and several countries. Dr. Helen Caldicott, president of the Nuclear Policy Research Institute, presented this symposium which truly lived up to all expectations in cooperation with the Nuclear Information and Resource Service (NIRS) and the Chicago Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR). NEIS and North Suburban Peace Initiative (NSPI) were local cosponsors.

Friday morning started off with a welcome from Michael Mariotte, Executive Director of NIRS, and an introduction to the distinguished lead speaker of this conference, Dr. Helen Caldicott. As President of the Nuclear Policy Research Institute, Dr. Caldicott spoke about the genetic, biological and medical implications of nuclear power. Dr. Caldicott was the co-winner of the 1985 Nobel Peace Prize. She also founded the Women's Action for Nuclear Disarmament (WAND), and is the author of numerous books, the most recent of which is entitled, The New Nuclear Danger: George W. Bush's Military Industrial Complex.

Following this, Dan Hirsch, from the Committee to Bridge the Gap, spoke about the state of security (or, rather, insecurity) at nuclear power plants in the age of terrorism. Along the same vein, David Lochbaum, a nuclear safety engineer from the Union of Concerned Scientists, spoke about nuclear accidents waiting to happen. David told the gathering that the reactor core at the typical nuclear power plant is a 100-ton mix of uranium and plutonium fuel along with radioactive waste products. If this radioactivity is not controlled, hazardous materials can be released to contaminate large regions.

But it doesn't take an accident for a nuclear power plant to release radioactivity into our air, water and soil. All it takes is the plant's routine operation, and federal regulations permit the radioactive releases, which are an everyday part of a nuclear

Continued on page 2....

Inside This Issue...

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Nuclear Power and Children's Health Conference – a Rousing Success |
| 1 | The Empire Strikes Back |
| 3 | NEIS Notes – Lot's of Changes! |

Nuclear Energy Information Service
P.O. Box 1637, Evanston, IL 60204
(847) 869-7650; -7658 Fax
www.neis.org neis@neis.org

plant's operation. (Many people, of course, do not understand this and the companies providing the populous with its electrical power wish to keep it this way.) A reactor's fuel rods, pipes, tanks and valves can leak. Mechanical error as well as human error can also cause leaks.

Panel Two included Steven Wing, Associate Professor of Epidemiology at the University of North Carolina. He spoke regarding Three Mile Island and the incidence of cancer. One of the revelations regarding this accident was that, if a doctor spoke out about findings at Three Mile Island, he was subject to "scrutiny". Dr. Chris Busby, from the Department of Human Anatomy and Cell Biology of the University of Liverpool, addressed the subject of childhood cancer clusters near the Sellafield Nuclear Reactor in Britain. He mentioned that the radiation that gathered in the mud surrounding the area, including that near the Irish Sea, became increasingly dangerous due to a buildup of plutonium.



Following lunch on Friday, Panel Three took off with a talk from NIRS' Mary Olson regarding the "seamless garment of nuclear power and nuclear weapons." One so often leads to the next, diplomatic assurances aside. Following this, Bill Dougherty, the Senior Scientist at the Stockholm Environmental Institute, addressed the myth of "clean air". Uranium enrichment plants in Paducah, Kentucky, not only produces CO2 in its fuel cycle, but also emits more than half of the chlorofluorocarbons in the atmosphere in the process of fuel enrichment and fabrication within the United States. Amazingly enough, if the enrichment plant at Paducah were shut down, 93% of a certain chlorofluorocarbon would no longer pollute American skies. This plant, alone, has a significant effect upon the state of global warming in which America has a big part to play.

Day One ended on an up note with Steven Strong's solar electric power demonstration. Strong is a pioneer in the renewable energy movement in the United States. He has a background in engineering and architecture and consults with many, both here and abroad, on the integration of solar electric power in homes as well as in industry. He is the author of the book, The Solar Electric House: A Design Manual for Photovoltaic Power Systems.

On Day Two, Dave Kraft, Executive Director of the Nuclear Energy Information Service spoke briefly about how our institutions designed to safeguard the public and the environment have totally failed both. It's time for people to begin creating their own alternative institutions, and getting involved with and financially supporting organizations like NEIS, NIRS and the other groups at the Conference. Dr. Helen Caldicott, spoke, again, regarding the medical

implications of nuclear power. A special video address from Dr. Patch Adams of the Gesundheit! Institute was shown Saturday morning, as well. Dr. Andrew Kantner of Chicago PSR wrapped up the Saturday introduction by giving a detailed Power Point presentation on the expected medical effects of a hypothetical accident at Illinois Exelon's Dresden nuclear power station, 55 miles southwest of Chicago.

During the talk by Paul Gunter of NIRS, the defects of aging nuclear plants and risk of terrorist attack upon nuclear plants was addressed. Following the accident at Three Mile Island, the United States has had no new nuclear plants built, however, a "Nuclear Power Renaissance" is being considered. Several speakers mentioned that rather than referring to this as a "renaissance", this should be called a "relapse".

UCS' David Lochbaum spoke again about unsafe reactors. Lochbaum is a nuclear engineer who worked in nuclear power plants for seventeen years until he and a colleague identified a safety problem in 1992. When they raised the issue the plant manager, the utility and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission with no results, they decided to go to Congress. Here the problem was eventually corrected at the original plant as well as plants across the country. He has written numerous reports, including "Three Mile Island's Puzzling Legacy" and the book, Nuclear Waste Disposal Crisis.

Mary Osborn Ouassiai spoke on Saturday regarding the effects of the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant facility meltdown. She is a long-time resident of Harrisburg, PA, and since the meltdown has monitored the effects both on the people surrounding the plant as well on the plants and animals of that area. She showed dramatic slides showing irrefutable evidence of genetic damage to plants in particular, all of which the NRC wishes to deny or downplay.

Oscar Shirani, Nuclear Industry Whistle-Blower, gave the gathering a preponderance of evidence that dry cask storage of so-called "spent fuel" (which is a misnomer since the fuel is far from being spent in the sense that it is much more lethal following use), is a very dangerous practice. Mr. Shirani made it clear that there are so many potential weak areas within aging nuclear plants, including the thin walls of the dry cask storage vessels, that it is highly probable that a major nuclear accident will occur aside from an act of terrorism. Shirani was a quality assurance auditor for the Exelon Corporation when he found nine critical faults in a spent fuel rod waste container. When he brought this to the attention of superiors, he was harassed and eventually dismissed from his position.

In Panel Two, Diane D'Arrigo, Director of the Radioactive Waste Project, of NIRS, talked about the reclassification of radioactive waste into recycled goods. She underlined how vulnerable our society is when it comes to being able to detect the hundreds of tons of radioactive material that the nuclear industry has "disguised" in the form of everyday articles that can irradiate our environment for one hundred to one million years. The American people are not able to give their "informed consent" regarding whether they want "radwaste" in their children's braces or tricycles, since they are unaware of where this irradiated material was deposited and where it continues to recycle through society, in their midst.

Harvey Wasserman brought a great amount of "positive energy" to round out the ending of the weekend. He is an anti-nuclear and environmental activist and senior editor for the



NEIS table at NPCH Conference. Photo: Tanya Murza, NIRS

Free Press. Wasserman has authored several books including four on nuclear power and renewable energy. He said that "Wind blows nuclear away," since wind is currently generating power at about 4 cents a kilowatt-hour, and in about a decade will have the price down to about 1-1/2 to 2 cents a kilowatt-hour. 1-1/2 to 2 cents is cheaper than just about any other way of generating electricity...especially when external costs such as pollution, global warming, possibility of sabotage, etc. Wind and other renewables also have the advantage that, being small scale, they can be sited closer to where they will be used...much of the electricity generated each year is lost in transmission lines, and the farther it has to travel, the more that is lost.

All in all, a very informative, and ultimately positive conference. Still, the final question is "what will YOU do?" We all need to combine our efforts to make a nuclear power-free USA a reality. ■

NEIS Notes

NEIS Board Never Bored – 2004 an Active Year:

The heart, soul and conscience of NEIS – the Board – weathered many changes in 2004. The Board welcomed the return of Clara Takarabe, who was on sabbatical in the Middle East, teaching music on the West Bank.

Several newcomers added new energy to the mix. Former Board member Michael Duerr rejoined the organization at the beginning of the year. Another former Board member, Dennis Nelson, rejoined in the Fall. New additions Dolores Pino and Dorian Breuer joined as a result of the NPCH Conference.

Regrettably, NEIS had to say farewell to Joy Reese, who joined in 2003. Joy brought a strong practical sense to Board decisions, and had a keen sense of marketing and promoting NEIS. We thank her for her contributions, and wish her well.

Active Board outreach for new members is ongoing. Those interested on Board service should contact the office, where you can obtain an initial screening kit to help you and NEIS decide on whether Board service is a good choice.

Combination NEIS/NIRS Joint Membership Offer Returns:

In September NEIS and NIRS of Washington, D.C., agreed once again to offer dual membership to both organizations for one year. The purpose of this plan is to provide maximum outreach to both member bases, and for NIRS to qualify for matching funds from a major donor.

This plan was offered previously in 1999, and requires little from existing members. NEIS will offer as an option to all new and renewing members the choice of also being listed as a

NIRS new/renewing member. If the person selects this option at normal NEIS membership rates (\$30/year), s/he will receive the mailings, alerts and e-mail announcements of **both** organizations through Sept., 2005 at no added cost. For a membership contribution of \$35 or more, the member can choose to receive NIRS' *Nuclear Monitor* publication. A member must actively choose this option to receive the publication.

For each joint member listed, an anonymous donor will match the amount and donate this money to NIRS. At the end of the one-year trial period, members will have the option of renewing membership with each organization individually.

So, stay better informed, and help both organizations grow in 2005. Join or renew today!

Year-End Fundraisers That Will Help Both You and NEIS:

'Tis the season of giving once again, and NEIS hopes that you will both help us with your generous renewal and year end contribution for a less-nuclear world. But, as we always do, we try to help you, too, and make this giving both more possible and less "painful" in the pocketbook. Consider:

- **Entertainment Books Now Available:** NEIS once again offers you incredible savings on hundreds of choice dining and entertainment venues. Even save tons of money on your groceries, dry-cleaning, and video rentals. All three Chicagoland books are currently available for \$20. We can also order out-of-town books for you (costs vary from city to city; call us for prices). At \$20, these books make incredible gifts, both to yourself, and to others; and also make perfect office perks or inexpensive stocking stuffer/Secret Santa gifts. NEIS takes credit card orders as well. Call the office to order, to download the form from our website and mail in. We do charge \$4 P/H per book, and send them out USPS Priority Mail; or make arrangements to pick up at our office for free. Order today!!
- **Internet Shopping to Help NEIS – at No Extra Cost to You!** If you shop on the Internet, please consider a painless, easy way that will save you money and earn NEIS contributions. Go to our homepage, and click on the "iGive" link found there. By registering with iGive and listing NEIS as your receiving organization, we will get automatic contributions from many of the online purchases you would ordinarily make anyway – at no cost to you. You must begin your shopping through the iGive Mall; after that, you can do what you normally do anyway. The rest is up to the bookkeepers. Join today, and help us effortlessly. Some sample vendors: Barnes & Nobles; eBay 50% Off; buy.com; Tower Records; Office Max; Dell Computers; Lands End; Eddie Bauer, Circuit City. PetCo; Travelocity, Sears; just to name a few. If you're online-shopping anyway, do it for a less-nuclear world, okay?
- **Books Available:** NEIS has a selection of books available for sale for those of you wishing to give gifts with a little more substance than fruitcakes this year. The hugely popular "Addicted to War" book is available at discount for only \$7.50, plus S/H (normally \$10). This comic book makes a great stocking stuffer. NEIS is still selling the "DU/Uranium Weapons Conference Readers," 225 pages from the Oct. 2003 Hamburg Conference on depleted uranium and radiologic weapons. Cost is \$25 US plus \$4 S/H.

Ten Simple Things... None of these things appeal to you? Look at the other 10 options that we suggest as ways that you can both help NEIS and yourself. Fill out and return the "10 Simple Things..." form with this mailing, and we'll get back to you to help get you started today. ■

New from NEIS in 2005...

The “Know” Nukes Educational Series

***“Resisting ‘Nuclear Renaissance’ Plans for a
More-Irradiated World.”***

(to “know” them is to – say “NO!” to them!)

The “Know Nukes” presentation series is an ongoing series of educational events hosted by Nuclear Energy Information Service of Evanston, IL, to inform the public about the ongoing hazards from nuclear power, radioactive wastes and the nuclear industry. Unless stated otherwise, the events will take place on the 2nd Thursday of each month, from 7-9 p.m., at the NEIS Conference Room, 845 Chicago Avenue, in Evanston. The format will usually consist of a video or live presenter on a specific topic, followed by a discussion, and an immediate opportunity to take immediate action on the topic presented. Unless stated otherwise the event will be free of charge; voluntary contributions are appreciated, and educational materials will be available for sale. Light refreshments will be served. (NOTE: Because some planned programs are still in development, call the office in advance to confirm the topic and the speaker).

The first three programs proposed for 2005 are:

1.) Nukes 102 – More Than You Probably Wanted to Know about Nuclear Power, but, It’s Still Important

Date: January 13, 2005; Proposed speaker/video: a call-in Q&A session, featuring NEIS director, Dave Kraft; Location: NEIS office, 845 Chicago Ave., Evanston.

2.) Medical Consequences of a Major Nuclear Accident

Date: February 10, 2005; Proposed speaker/video: Dr. Andy Kantner Chicago Physicians for Social Responsibility (to be confirmed); Location: NEIS office, Evanston

3.) Three Mile Island – the Accident Continues

Date: March 10, 2005; Proposed speaker/video: Activist Mary Osborne, resident of TMI, and her slide show (to be confirmed); Location: NEIS office, Evanston.

☞ *Bring friends and family!*

☞ *Meet other activists!*

☞ *Help promote the event!*