

PM: On the Nuclear Watch

By Polly Mann

The publication Nukewatch Quarterly, out of Luck, Wisconsin, provides comprehensive reports, articles of vital importance, and recent news on nuclear issues: weapons, power, waste, and nonviolent resistance. To give you just a taste, the following are articles from the fall 2014 issue: "Childhood Leukemia Cases Up 37 Percent near Nuclear Reactors" (worldwide, over 60 epidemiological studies have found 70 percent leukemia increases in children living near nuclear reactors), "Regulators Okay Indefinite Onsite Storage of Highly Radioactive Waste Fuel," "Global Physicians Issue Scathing Critique of UN Report on Fukushima," and "Air Force Targeting China to Spend \$81 Billion on a New Nuclear Bomb."

A broadsheet-size page of "Nuclear Shorts," gathering from a variety of sources, alerts us to these alarming facts:

The Savannah River Site (SRS), located on an earthquake fault and a large aquifer [in South Carolina], is fast becoming the world's largest nuclear dumping ground, receiving nuclear waste from Italy, Sweden, Belgium, Canada, and perhaps Japan. Director Tom Clements of the SRS Watch group says, "The SRS already has more nuclear waste than it knows how to deal with."

On May 29, 2014 the Illinois House of Representatives passed a bill to provide massive subsidies to the state's nuclear power reactors and curb the growth of truly "clean" renewable energy sources. The bill was part of a larger effort on the national level by the Koch Brothers' infamous American Legislative Exchange Council, ALEC.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's proposal for cutting greenhouse gas emissions treats nuclear reactors as "zero carbon" power sources and includes them in the baseline "clean energy" production. It does not consider the toxic legacy of radioactive waste, security breaches, high levels of water use and dirty process of uranium mining, or routine radiation releases that come with nuclear power.

On August 1, Southern California Edison announced its plan for a 2016 dismantling of the two reactors at its San Onofre nuclear power facility, which is projected to take 20 years and cost \$4.4 billion, making it the most expensive decommissioning in the industry's 70-year history.

Unseasonably high temperatures, which have increased in frequency in recent years due to global warming, have threatened to force showdowns of nuclear power reactors in Florida and Sweden in a growing trend that could soon put reactors in direct competition with local citizens for their right to fresh water.

A 2014 study done by the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, (IPPNW) found that atmospheric soot, global cooling, decreased precipitation

rates, sea ice expansion, ozone loss, increase in UV radiation, and resulting impacts on agriculture would result from the use of just .006 percent of the current global nuclear arsenal. This kind of “small” regional nuclear conflict has the potential to produce a global nuclear famine. IPPNW was critical of a 2014 report about the Fukushima radiation disaster done by the UN Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR), saying it was “over-optimistic.”

So, is nuclear power an answer to the world’s need for safe energy? Can there be a ban on the production of nuclear weapons at the same time? Mark Z. Jacobson, professor of civil and environmental engineering at Stanford University and director of its Atmosphere and Energy Program, has this to say about it: “Every dollar spent on nuclear is one less dollar spent on clean renewable energy and one more dollar spent on making the world a comparatively dirtier and a more dangerous place, because nuclear power and nuclear weapons go hand in hand.”

And Tim Judson, director of Nuclear Information and Resource Service, says:

“No amount of spending on nuclear has reduced the technology’s costs nor overcome lengthy construction times and delays—whereas spending on renewables and efficiency has lowered their costs and increased their rate of deployment.”

A 24-page collection of reports on Japan’s Fukushima radiation disaster is available from Nukewatch. Read past issues of NukeWatch Quarterly at the website: nukewatchinfo.org, or receive NukeWatch Quarterly in your mailbox with any size donation, via PayPal, or with a check to Nukewatch, 740A Round Lake Rd, Luck, WI 54853.

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