



ENERGY ISSUES

Fukushima: The Nail in the Coffin of Nuclear Power?



By Abby Luby

The horrendous nuclear disaster at Japan's Fukushima Dai-Ichi plants in March 2011 was one of the world's worst nuclear accidents since the 1986 meltdown at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Station in the Ukraine.

Horrific images from Japan monopolized the news from huge explosions, raging fires and nightmarish evacuees swathed in face masks. Three of the four Dai-Ichi plants had core meltdowns and days later experts reported that airborne radioactive dust had reached the United States.

Fukushima makes real the dangers of nuclear power and a stunned world reacted. Many governments took action to either close their aging nuclear power plants or stop the construction of new ones. In Germany the coalition government decided that all 17 of their nuclear power plants would be closed by 2022 and one of Germany's oldest and largest nuclear facilities, RWE, permanently shut down just last week, caving to political pressure. Joining RWE in shutting down a plant was the utility company Vattenfall Europe. In Italy, a national referendum saw voters overwhelmingly repeal legislation that would allow the construction of new reactors. Switzerland is planning to phase out their reactors; the newer plants expect to be in operation until 2034 and all proposals for new plants will be turned down. Mexico is also considering taking similar action.

Producing electricity from nuclear power is fast becoming unpopular, says a recent Ipsos/Reuters poll. The feedback from almost 19,000 people from 24 countries is that the preferred sources of energy are solar, wind, hydroelectric power, natural gas and coal. Since Fukushima, 62 percent of people around the globe oppose nuclear energy.

Despite Fukushima, other countries are moving ahead with nuclear power, including China, England, India and the United States. China is testing some 28 plants now under construction and wants to have 100 plants up and running by 2020. England just announced last week that it plans to build eight new nuclear power plants and India has a new plant whose construction is slated to start in two years.

Here in the United States the nuclear power renaissance that was in full swing before Fukushima has slowed. The Obama Administration was pushing for an additional \$36 billion in loan guarantees to sweeten the deal to encourage utility companies to build more nuclear power plants. Some plants that were slated to receive those loans have now been mothballed. There are, however, new reactors in Georgia and South Carolina poised for construction, pending regulatory approval and financial backing. In Georgia, utility giant Southern Company, who already has two reactors at their Vogtle plant, has been awarded \$8.3 billion of guaranteed federal

loans to build two more reactors, scheduled to go on line in 2016. Although the Nuclear Regulatory Commission has yet to approve Southern's application, construction has already started on the site. In South Carolina, SCANA Corporation plans to build two reactors at their Summer nuclear station near Jenkinsville, targeting 2016 as the year to first produce electricity.

But do we need all the electricity produced by nuclear power? A United Nations panel on climate change said that almost 80 percent of the world's energy supply could be met by renewable energy sources by mid-century. Another study by the Deloitte Center for Energy Solutions report that nine out of 10 businesses and 70 percent of consumers have set goals to lower their electricity costs. The report also said that nearly a third of companies polled have goals to self-generate electricity, whether through solar panels, reuse of wasted heat or other methods.

The Energy Information Administration recently reported that the demand for electricity is down from 2.4 percent a year in the last ten years. The decreased demand was attributed to low-power processors, smarter manufacturing plants, rooftop solar panels and other, alternative technologies that keep usage down.

Here in Westchester, studies find electricity demand is down, decreasing the usage from the Indian Point Nuclear Power Plant. Although the plant's owner, Entergy,

has applied to extend their operating license for another 20 years, until 2035, the utility company has dropped the output of Indian Point from 875 megawatts in 2010 to 360 megawatts in 2011. The twin reactors at Indian Point produce 2,100 megawatts but Entergy has been selling most of the electricity on power grids serving New England, New York, Mid-Atlantic, Quebec and Ontario. Only about four percent of power from Indian Point feeds Westchester and in New York City.

Since Fukushima, the groundswell of the anti-nuclear movement has grown against the continued operation of Indian Point and other, similar aging power plants around the country. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), in reviewing applications for re-licensing, has said they are adding another level of oversight since Fukushima, which includes an in-depth safety review of all 104 commercial reactors in the United States. The report is due out in early summer.

The NRC has never denied an application for a license extension, but many organizations have contested Entergy's application with a long list of strong contentions. Most notably, wanting to shutter the plant is New York Governor Andrew Cuomo and New York State's Attorney General's office. It remains to be seen if the NRC will take the lessons learned from Fukushima and apply them going forward.

"Abby Luby is a freelance writer in Westchester and the greater New York City area. Her new novel about nuclear power, "Nuclear Romance" is expected out in eBook format by the end of the summer, 2011.

LEGAL

Statement on Behalf of the Family of Charles Campbell

Family of Dobbs Ferry Deli Shooting Victim Responds to New York's Highest Court Unanimously Affirming Murder Conviction of Richard DiGuglielmo

"We have been asked by the family of Charles Campbell to respond on their

behalf to the decision issued today by the New York State Court of Appeals.

"The family is thankful that the murder conviction of Richard D. DiGuglielmo was unanimously affirmed today by New York's highest court. But

more than anything they are sadly reflecting upon the fact that Charles will never return to them and the man who senselessly shot him will be separated from his family and friends for many more years.



imprisonment, if they serve as a lesson to young people to think about the consequences of their actions before acting out of anger.

"The family wants to thank everyone who has shared with them

their love, support and prayers over these many difficult years. Finally, they express their gratitude to the Dobbs Ferry police department and Westchester County District Attorney's Office for their efforts to see that justice was done in this case."

Randolph McLaughlin and Debra Cohen have been the Campbell Family attorneys for the past fifteen years.

When Charles was alive he spent a lot of his time working with troubled kids to help them learn to make wiser choices. His family hopes that something constructive will come from his death, and Mr. DiGuglielmo's

Before speaking to the police... call

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