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MONITORED THIS ISSUE:

OBAMA DE-FUNDS YUCCA MOUNTAIN

In the first step toward permanently ending the controversial proposed Yucca Mountain, Nevada high-level radioactive waste dump, President Barack Obama's first budget ends nearly all funding for the project -- fulfilling an Obama campaign promise.

(685.5934) NIRS Washington - Yes, elections do matter.

The decision to end nearly all funding for Yucca Mountain was announced quietly, tucked away at the very end of Obama's initial FY 2010 budget statement for the Department of Energy: "The Yucca Mountain program will be scaled back to those costs necessary to answer inquiries from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, while the Administration devises a new strategy toward nuclear waste disposal."

Full budget documents have not yet been released, so how much those "costs necessary..." will amount to isn't yet known. But administration officials, including Energy Secretary Steven Chu, have made it clear that the Yucca Mountain project is finished. Under intense questioning from pro-nuclear Senators, Secretary Chu told the Senate Budget Committee March 11 that the Energy Department will set up a high-level panel to review U.S. radioactive waste policy and submit recommendations by the end of the year.

Some of the senators, such as New Hampshire Republican Judd Gregg, were less upset about the end of the Yucca Mountain project than at the signal ending the project says about the future of nuclear power. They were also concerned that in his quasi-State of the Union speech in February, Obama listed several energy technologies his administration will support; nuclear power was not among them.

Chu told the senators that nuclear power is "an essential part of our energy mix" and promised to accelerate the existing

\$18.5 Billion (14 Billion Euro) loan guarantee program for new reactor construction. But Chu didn't promise to seek or support more loan guarantees. And it's unclear how the existing program could be accelerated in practical terms, since no new reactors are even close to obtaining licenses from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Meanwhile, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV), Yucca Mountain's strongest opponent in Congress, introduced a bill on March 12 to establish an independent commission to re-evaluate U.S. radioactive waste policy. Reid's bill, which at Monitor press time did not yet have a number, would set up a 9-person commission of which four members would be appointed by Democratic leadership, four by Republican leadership, with a chairman appointed jointly by Reid and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA). No member of the commission could currently work on the DOE's high-level waste program, nor be employed by the government at any level -federal, state or local.

The commission would be required to issue a final report within 2 years on feasibility, cost, risks, legal, public health and environmental impacts of alternatives to Yucca Mountain and their impacts on local communities, including:

- Transferring responsibility for managing nuclear waste to a government corporation
- Cost sharing options between the Federal government and private industry for developing nuclear fuel management technologies
- Centralized interim storage facilities in

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- communities willing to host them
- Research and development for advanced fuel cycle technologies
- Federal government taking title to nuclear waste
- Secure on-site storage of nuclear waste
- Permanent deep geologic storage for civilian and defense wastes
- Other management and technological approaches as the Commission may see fit

The idea for such a commission first surfaced in the early 1990s, by then-Senator Richard Bryan of Nevada and hundreds of environmental groups, which were already working to stop the Yucca Mountain project and expose its inability to meet waste disposal regulations.

Yucca Mountain was chosen as the only site being examined for a high-level waste dump by Congress in 1987. Even then, it was widely perceived as a political, rather than scientific decision. At the time, three sites were under consideration: Yucca, and sites in Texas and Washington state. But the huge Texas congressional delegation teamed up with the then-Speaker of the House, who was from Washington, and forced Yucca Mountain as the only possible site in what became known as the "screw Nevada" bill.

Twenty-two years and billions of dollars later, it appears as though Nevada may be getting the last laugh.

The largest concern for environmental groups now is who will make up the

composition of the DOE panel and the independent commission -should Reid's legislation be enacted- and what future radioactive waste policy for the U.S. may look like. A focus on reprocessing, for example, would be certain to arouse strong opposition from the environmental community, but it is increasingly common to hear nuclear industry spokespeople support reprocessing as their preferred option.

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URANIUM MINING AND HUMAN RIGHTS - INDIGENOUS VOICES SPEAK OUT

The Beyond Nuclear project based in Washington DC, U.S.A., recently convened a series of speaking events for Indigenous people affected by nuclear industry projects. Featured speakers included Mitch, an Arrernte/Luritja woman from Central Australia, Sidi-Amar Taoua, a Tuareg nomad from Niger and Manuel Pinto, an Acoma Pueblo person from New Mexico who won the 2008 nuclear free futures award. Dr Bruno Chareyron, director of the French organization CRIIRAD (Commission for Independent Research and Information on Radioactivity) also participated in the tour to present his research of uranium contamination in Niger.

(685.5935) Beyond Nuclear Initiative - The 'Indigenous Voices Speak out' tour was timed to coincide with the Power Shift Youth Climate Action Conference in Washington, which was attended by around 12 000 people from across the USA. There was a strong focus on 'carbon free, nuclear free' campaigning, with the panel discussions on nuclear issues attracting over 500 people.

Over the three days of speaking tour events, which included a press conference, film screening of Poison Wind (directed by Jenny Pond), and lobbying on Capitol Hill, the Indigenous speakers shared many personal experiences and insights about the devastating effects of the nuclear industry on land, culture and communities.

Mitch, who has spent years fighting a radioactive dump proposed on her traditional land said; "we have companies coming into Australia and we are told that uranium is clean and

green and it is renewable energy. We know that this is lies and this is a disgusting form of control over a population that is made to rely on the government for all their resources, their energy, their consumption."

"It is policies of genocide so that other people can have power."

"We are told that the next generation will have the education and the smarts to fix up our problems... but I don't think we have the moral rights as your elders to leave the mess for you to fix up."

"We do not want the next generation to try and get water out of rock, to get air out of sludge, to get food out of the bottom of the sea that is full of algae."

Sidi-Amar Taoua explained the impact of the uranium mining industry on Tuareg people and their traditions;

"The Tuareg remain one of the last people who live in the Saharan desert. Their way of life revolves around finding grazing for flocks of livestock in one of the planet's hardest landscapes."

"Uranium continues to be a critical French national interest since the country produces more than 80 per cent of energy from power plants that are fuelled by Niger uranium. One French light bulb in three is lit by uranium from Tuareg land."

"People have many kind of diseases. Many are worried about the spread of radioactive dust from the mining companies bulldozers and machines. People are forced to pick through the company garbage for scrap metal to build and furnish their houses."

Meanwhile French mining executives and other expatriates live nearby in luxurious villas with land and swimming pools."

"Tuareg believe uranium mining and its attendant operations pose a critical threat for the environment and especially for the Tuareg existence. The Tuareg have inhabited this part of northern Niger since the 19th century. They understand that the world is changing but they are asking that their rights as indigenous people, their land

and their way of life to be respected." With the nuclear industry still insisting a 'nuclear renaissance' is around the corner, Manuel Pino from the Acoma Pueblo tribe succinctly pointed out; "...how can we put the cart before the horse and say that nuclear power is the

answer when we cant even dispose of the waste or clean up the existing legacy mines or mills that exist, in a majority of times, on indigenous peoples lands."

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THE CURSE OF THREE MILE ISLAND

As the nuclear era approaches the 30th anniversary of Three Mile Island's (TMI) partial-core meltdown, the worst commercial nuclear accident in American history, nuclear energy nowadays even appears to be fashionable in certain European green circles these days. At the same time non-political social organizations and conservative groups oppose nuclear power for purely economical reasons. What have been the consequences of the Harrisburg accident aftermath for the nuclear industry and what are the prospects for nuclear power?

(685.5936) Laka Foundation - The US - until the accident, beginning on March 28 - was expecting to derive about 14 percent of its generating capacity from nuclear power stations in 1979. The US industry had begun confidently of taking new orders totaling 5,000 - 8,000 MW that year - more than any year since 1974. Instead, after 'Harrisburg' president Carter ordered an inquiry into the accident and said he would expedite efforts to expand the number of nuclear inspectors. But mid-April he added that "there is no way for us to abandon nuclear power in the foreseeable future," reiterating his administration's intention to introduce fresh legislation to accelerate the licensing of new nuclear plants. Intentions that were embedded in forecasts to build between 200 and 500 more nuclear power stations by the year 2000. The only thing on which Carter had been sure was to quit the fast breeder project, the last experimental one at Clinch River in Tennessee. Because of proliferation concerns, he was a consistent opponent of fast breeders. In a May 4, 1979 speech he called the Clinch River breeder reactor a technological dinosaur. Instead of investing public resources in the breeder demonstration project, he urged attention to improving the safety of existing nuclear technology. Finally, despite the fact that at the time of the TMI-accident, 17 utilities had applied to build 30 new nuclear plants in the United States, not a single nuclear power plant started construction in the US since the accident at Three Mile Island - 30 years ago this month.

When the world leading economy doesn't build new nuclear power plants anymore, there isn't any doubt that Harrisburg turned out to be disastrous for the nuclear industry. It is true that before the accident at Three Mile Island the great growth of nuclear plant ordering across the Western World in 1960s and 1970s had already slowed dramatically. In the United States the stagnancy started already in 1974. Projects were stopped and the building of new ones had been delayed. This was in fact mainly a correction on the too high expectations on the share of nuclear power on the grid in the future. The impact of Harrisburg on the Western World outside the US is, however, indisputable too. The accident boosted the growth of the anti-nuclear movement in Europe and nuclear power became a serious discussion issue within established political parties, leading to a strong public opinion against the continuing use of nuclear energy. In Sweden it had been clear that Harrisburg disturbed a political agreement to build 12 nuclear power plants. Harrisburg was a watershed in the development of nuclear energy. The then executive director of the International Energy Agency Ulf Lantzke admitted that dwindling public confidence was becoming a serious threat to nuclear growth.

Other modifying factors why all previous estimates on nuclear generating capacity for the year 1985 had been reduced step by step in the western world by the end of the 1970s was due to the much slower growth in energy demand in the slipstream of the

1973-74 oil crisis. This caused climbing construction costs and high interest rates, meaning a poor climate for capital investment. Only France and states with dictatorships built their nuclear power stations fast. From 1979 to 1982 France spent US\$3bn a year on nuclear power plants and was put into service every two months (18 to be precise). For comparison: construction started of only 17 reactors after 1982 in France and of those only 5 reactors were ordered after 1982 (including the Flamanville EPR). The building of new plants was delayed in Germany, Scandinavia, and in America. But in Russia, in Iran, in South Korea they sprung up. Despite this continuing use of nuclear energy, the TMI accident was a turning point for the nuclear industry. The infamous accident and its once unthinkable partial meltdown of the reactor core brought new construction of nuclear power plants in the US to a grinding halt. Or not?

New nuclear power plants in the US?

Currently there are 17 applications for 26 nuclear plants under consideration. Recently, Oklahoma House lawmakers passed a nuclear power bill, 26 years after Public Service Company of Oklahoma proposed the Black Fox nuclear power plant in eastern Oklahoma, which was abandoned after nine years of protests. The proposal is supported by Republican House leaders that emphasize alternative forms of energy, among which they include nuclear, as a way to ease the state and nation's dependence on foreign energy sources. Among other things, the measure establishes a review process for the Oklahoma

Corporation Commission to consider nuclear power proposals and creates a task force to consider tax changes that would encourage construction of a plant in Oklahoma.

Opponents said the huge cost of a nuclear power plant, estimated at between US\$6 bn and US\$10 bn, would mean customer rates would rise significantly to help pay for the plant.

The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), which publicly opposes the plan, has said consumer rate increases of 20 to 40 per cent are possible, based on an analysis of similar legislation in other states. Officials of the senior advocacy group said Oklahoma's elderly residents are struggling just to pay their medical and prescription drug costs and that raising electric rates during a bad economy is a bad idea. Today there are 104 nuclear power plants in the US in 34 states, but none in Oklahoma.

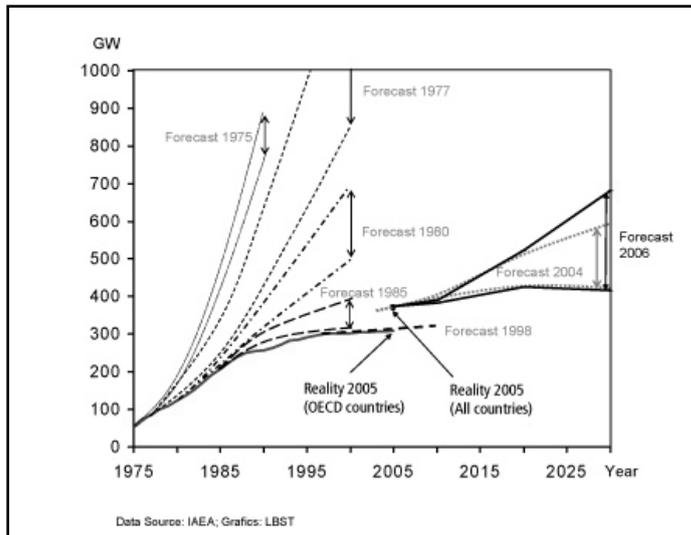
The question can be raised how much will remain of the current plans to build nuclear power plants. Since the early years of this century there is much talk about the resurrection of the nuclear industry. Up to now, however, there isn't any sign of it. Even the pro-nuclear NEI Magazine sounds pessimistically. In his article "Will nuclear rebound?" Chris Gadowski, the managing editor of Nuclear, New Energy Finance, voiced the unrest within the US nuclear lobby about Obama's views on nuclear power with descriptions as "not optimal" or "not a nuclear energy proponent", and of course his budget cuts for the proposed Yucca Mountain nuclear waste facility.

Necessity to build new coalitions?

The position against nuclear energy of a non-political organization as AARP makes clear that the established groups against nuclear energy can make use of that.

While some leading (European) environmentalists have become pro-nuclear, because they are of the opinion that nuclear energy is a

necessary source of energy in the struggle against climate change, there are American conservatives against nuclear energy because of economical reasons. Something that has become clear at a recent panel on nuclear energy in Harrisburg. Two speakers at opposite ends of the political spectrum took the floor at a Commonwealth Foundation panel on nuclear power. Eric Epstein, chairman of Three Mile



Island Alert, a group that advocates for alternatives to nuclear power, and Jerry Taylor, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, an authoritative Washington based conservative think-tank, for whom it's purely a matter of economics. There is, however, not so much difference in the outcome of their different reasoning. Epstein explained - before the meltdown of unit 2 - the extreme over budgeting and delayed completions of the two TMI reactors. The construction of the first TMI unit, started in 1968, concluded two year behind schedule before it was put into service in 1974, while the costs had been risen from US\$183m to US\$400m. The second TMI unit was completed five years behind schedule while the expenses were more than three times the original estimated costs, US\$700m instead of US\$206m. The reactor operated just three months when the accident happened. Epstein estimated the total cleanup costs at US\$805m and noted that the electricity ratepayers mainly pay this bill.

Many would expect that a vast majority of the public identify Epstein's view on nuclear power skeptically, the view of a 'labor democrat'. But Jerry Taylor, who

is advocating smaller government and freer markets, has taken much the same view, though citing different reasons for a no-nuke stance.

"Whenever they have been asked the markets have said 'no' to nuclear power," he said, stating that it serves roughly 20 per cent of America's energy needs, a statistic he blamed to its strong subsidization. While many policymakers have debated changing

of regulations to allow the construction of new power stations, Mr. Taylor said, the real barrier is the cost to build them. Currently one new plant costs between US\$6 billion and US\$9 billion to build, he said. Even with large subsidies, investors have been unwilling to take a chance, according to Taylor. He said he personally was neutral on nuclear power, however, as long as it is not economically viable he doesn't see any reason to go on with this. A regional newspaper quoted: "In

Finland, where the first privately funded new nuclear plant in decades is being built, construction is two years behind schedule and 60 per cent over budget. Nuclear plants continue to be built in places like France, China and India because they are dictated by the government, not investors, said Taylor." (But, he is optimistic about that, too).

Prospects

In order to stop the new rise of fallacies that nuclear power is a solution to overcome the climate change the remains of the old anti-nuclear movement has to build new coalitions, though the political views of some groups might be totally different, if groups can deal with each other in a pragmatic way as long as their interests coincide in the field of nuclear power there's nothing wrong to align with them. For instance with conservatives (Cato) or non-political groups as AARP. If the current economical crisis is deepening, however, the choice for nuclear power might evaporate by oneself. As noted above the dramatic slowdown of nuclear ordering by the end of the 1970s was due to a complex mixture of factors in which the oil crisis played a dominant role. The same was

true in the 1980s. Since the late 1980s worldwide capacity has risen much more slowly, from 300 GW in the late 1980s to 366 GW in 2005. This happened again in the slipstream of an economical crisis mixed up with the political results of the Chernobyl disaster in 1986. Though in general you can't say that the current crisis is the same as the crises before, however for energy use you certainly can. The current economy is shrinking very fast. Moreover, a whole battery of scientists and economist are predicting crises in the short term that are orders of magnitude larger than the current one, of which it is still not yet clear how long it will last.

No time to waste (money)!

For the sake of argument, let's suppose

societies make a clear choice for nuclear power. What if there will be a nuclear accident comparable with Three Mile Island or Chernobyl in let's say 2017? Due to economics (nuclear companies will face huge losses and bankruptcy) and reviving popular resistance all proposed project will be cancelled; half or three quarter of the projects of which construction already started will be abandoned and even countries which rely on nuclear energy (like Italy after Chernobyl) will phase out nuclear.

All the money available (and necessary) in the coming decade to combat climate change has been wasted on nuclear energy, which is not even a solution for climate change in the first place! Remember: every coin can be

only spent one time.

Sources: De Volkskrant (NL), 9 October 1974 / The Economist, 19 March, 1977 / Financial Times, 19 April, 1979 / Financial Times, 4 February 1981 / The Bulletin, March 12, 2009 (Pennsylvania) / Lancaster New Era, 12 March, 2009 (Pennsylvania) / AP, 13 March, 2009 / World Nuclear Industry Handbook / Graphic from Energy Watch Group paper: Uranium-Resources-Nuclear Energy

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AREVA'S MOX TRANSPORT: A TRAVELING SECURITY THREAT

About 1.8 tons of plutonium in Mixed-Oxide (MOX) fuel, enough to make 225 nuclear weapons, left the French port of Cherbourg on March 5, to travel to Japan via the Cape of Good Hope and the southwest Pacific Ocean. It is due to arrive in Japanese waters by late-May, according to Areva. This shipment represents an immediate risk of contamination to coastal communities along the route should anything go wrong. The shipment is vulnerable to accident and terrorist attack and stands as a reminder to all governments along the route of the unacceptable risks nuclear energy poses to the world.

(685.5937) Greenpeace International - The dangerous transport is another attempt of the dying industry to survive. As the French nuclear industry and President Sarkozy aggressively try to sell the European Pressurized Reactor (EPR), the latest in nuclear reactors, under the false premise of a climate change solution, they conveniently ignore the very real dangers associated with it, including health risks and potential terrorist attack. EPR reactors are meant to run on 50-100% MOX fuel.

Japan has been trying to use MOX in their nuclear reactors for more than ten years; and have repeatedly failed. The first shipment to Japan in 1999 ended in fiasco after the producer, UK state company British Nuclear Fuels, admitted it had deliberately falsified vital quality control safety data. After an 18,000-mile voyage, the rejected fuel was shipped back to the UK. Two more cargoes, one delivered in 1999, the other in 2001, were opposed by local citizens and regional governments. Both shipments remain in storage with

no prospect that they will ever be used.

There is plenty of evidence showing that the containers used to transport the MOX are not strong enough to withstand serious accidents or terrorist attack. Risk of fire is just one example, the containers are only tested over a few hours, but fires on board ships can last much longer (days or even weeks). Once MOX fuel disperses it poses a grave threat to public health and the environment.

Referring to a plutonium shipment in 2002, the Government of Antigua and Barbuda stated "our small states are fearful that a deliberate act of terror aimed at those ships may bring an end to our very existence. This is not fanciful or farfetched fiction." Considering all this, it is little wonder that plutonium and MOX shipments have been opposed by dozens of governments and their citizens, since they started.

Areva denying proliferation risks

On the anniversary of the Nuclear Non-

Proliferation Treaty (NPT) entering into force, the trade in nuclear bomb grade material between France and Japan seriously jeopardizes the international non-proliferation regime. As a result of civil nuclear programmes, the world now has more weapons usable plutonium in so-called commercial use than in all nuclear weapons arsenals put together.

In a March 2, open letter to Mohamed ElBaradei, Director General of the IAEA, Greenpeace states:

Our specific concerns are Areva's misrepresentation of the proliferation threat posed by commercial plutonium contained in this and other MOX fuel. They appear dangerously confused or deliberately denying the inherent proliferation risks of the Japanese plutonium MOX fuel. Specifically Areva (Henri Jacques Neau, Director of Transport) went on record March 1 saying: "It is impossible to make a nuclear weapon as suggested by Greenpeace. Here you must be

clear, this MOX does not have any interest for any people to make a nuclear weapon from it. There is no interest in the diversion of this material. We have this level of protection, because the MOX fuel contains plutonium. Everything that contains plutonium must have a protective measure,"

Late February following an interview with French news agency, AFP, an industrial source (most likely Areva) was cited in the article stating that, "To make a bomb" out of MOX, "you would first need an installation in order to separate the plutonium from the uranium. And still, the result would only be plutonium of "civil" quality and not military quality," affirmed this source.

These statements are clearly misleading, stating as it does there is a distinction between civil and military grade plutonium. This, as you are

aware is not the formal position of the IAEA, which classifies commercial plutonium MOX fuel as Category 1 nuclear material, requiring the highest level of security protection. As the IAEA safeguards glossary states, conversion of MOX fuel or powder to finished plutonium (metal) is of the order of 1-3 weeks.

Greenpeace is long used to Japanese nuclear industry denials that reactor-grade plutonium is a proliferation threat, and that it cannot be used to make nuclear weapons. However, you will be aware that as long ago as 1990 your predecessor Hans Blix confirmed to the Nuclear Control Institute that the IAEA does not dispute that reactor-grade plutonium can be used to manufacture nuclear weapons.

Now we have denials by the nuclear industry including an explicit denial by

Areva, which we believe is in defiance of both the IAEA classification of reactor grade plutonium and MOX fuel, as well as senior nuclear weapons scientists and U.S. government departments, including the Department of Energy.

You will be aware that the U.S. Department of Energy first briefed Japan and other states on the proliferation risks from commercial reprocessing, reactor grade plutonium and MOX fuel more than 30 years ago.

Sources: Greenpeace Press release, 6 March 2009 / Letter to ElBaradei, 2 March 2009 which can be found at: www.greenpeace.org/international/pres/s/reports/Open-letter-ElBaradei
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AREVA ON VERGE OF BANKRUPTCY: NO USE OF PUBLIC MONEY TO BAIL OUT NUCLEAR INDUSTRY

In the face of colossal losses on their EPR construction site in Finland, facing a two billion Euro invoice from the departure of Siemens from the project, some unwise investments in America, 60% fall in share prices over the last few months, Areva is staring down the barrel of business failure. The French nuclear industry is a disaster area, and public money should not be used to prop it up, but to develop renewable energies.

(685.5938) Sortir du Nucleaire - Nuclear company Areva is due to publish its 2008 end of year accounts any day. We already know though that this so-called "beacon" of French industry is on the verge of collapse and waiting once again for a hand-out from the French public to keep their failing nuclear industry alive. Areva is looking for a 3 billion Euro bail out just to balance its 2009 budget, and has already cancelled, on November 25, 2008, a planned uranium-mining project in Canada.

And another big setback for Areva, who were expecting such big things from this market: on December 5th South Africa cancelled its order for 12 nuclear power stations it had hoped to build.

While all this has been going on, the EPR site in Finland, started in February 2005, is rapidly turning into another catastrophe: already 38 months behind schedule, with the Finnish government invoicing Areva for 2.4 billion Euros in penalties for lateness. So, having been

invoiced at 3 billion Euros, the real cost of the project is more like 5.4 billion Euros. Barring any other surcharges.

Add to that the departure of Siemens from the project, announced this January, which has hit the company with another bill for 2 billion Euros to buy out their former ally, plus acquire the work they've already carried out and are withholding against payment. The Elysée would be by now thinking about letting Middle-Eastern capital into Areva, but this remains very hazardous. On the Paris Stock Exchange, Areva's price has slipped from 820 Euros per share last June to 325 Euros by now - a loss of more than 60%!

Additionally, the various reactor construction projects announced over the last few months and representing at least some market optimism for Areva, turn out to be completely "virtual": on his various foreign trips (Libya, Algeria, Morocco, Abu Dhabi, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, South Africa, Estonia, etc...), President Sarkozy has signed a series

of simple "cooperation agreements", and whilst these make frequent mention of an eventual desire to build EPR reactors, in fact absolutely nothing is definitely signed or sealed.

That led to the Elysée government "bluffing" everyone on February 4 and 24, with their announcements of 2 EPR reactors for India and 4 more for Italy: it's easy enough to say, much more difficult to do - specially at this time of world economic crisis - to find the kind of money necessary to fund the actual construction.

The other possible market Areva had been eying up but which isn't looking so good now: the USA. New President Obama's first announcement committed zero dollars to the nuclear sector... where it had hoped for up to 50 billion. Most reactor projects have been put on hold, and the few that are actually showing signs of life are run by Areva's big business rival, the American-Japanese consortium of

Westinghouse/Toshiba, General Electric/Hitachi.

None of which has stopped Areva investing heavily in America to buy into the supposed nuclear "renaissance" that is looking less and less realistic: in May 2008 Areva announced it was buying into the site at Bonneville, Idaho, to produce nuclear fuel. And in October 2008, Areva announced a 360 million dollar investment in the State of Virginia to produce heavy tolls and machinery for the American nuclear sector.

Areva is also holder of promises of

orders from EDF, which bought up British Energy at a top price, just before the economic crunch! But EDF is also heavily in debt and has lost almost 70% of its stock market value by mid-March... Seemingly incapable or recognizing a problem when she sees one, Madame Lauvergeon is sailing on full steam ahead with only one possible outcome, total financial disaster.

But, with Areva being supported by the state, it's the people of France who'll be picking up the bill when the time comes. There's still time to stop the whole mad affair, to stop President

Sarkozy from using public money to keep Areva afloat. He should follow the excellent example of President Obama in America, investing in energy economy and renewables.

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Areva: Siemens-Rosatom breach of non-compete clause. Areva has warned Siemens, that the latter's plan to create a nuclear joint venture with Russian Rosatom, are a breach of Siemens' contract with Areva. Siemens has a 34% share in Areva NP and under a shareholder agreement from January 2001 entered into obligations including a non-compete clause, Areva said in a statement on March 4, one day after Siemens announced a nuclear joint venture with Russian State Atomic Energy Corporation, or Rosatom. (See Nuclear Monitor 683: "Siemens leaving Areva; joining Rosatom?")

Under the shareholders' agreement, Siemens is not allowed to compete in activities it brought to Areva NP for a period of eight years. That includes nuclear reactor design and engineering, turnkey nuclear power plant construction, fuel design and manufacture, services, and safety-related instrumentation and control systems. Siemens said it could, however, market turbines, generators and electrical systems

for nuclear power plants since Areva NP does not produce those items.

Platts, 4 March 2009

Limitations to Rosatom-Siemens joint venture. A few days after Munich-based Siemens launched the joint venture with Rosatom, forecasting the construction of some 400 new nuclear power plants worldwide by 2030, German magazine Der Spiegel wrote Siemens has to limit its high expectations. Siemens-insiders claim there is a clause in the Rosatom-Siemens agreement that excludes political unstable regions ("politisch unsicheren Regionen") from the Joint Venture. Siemens seems to be particular cautious not to get involved again in the Bushehr nuclear reactor in Iran. The German company started the construction of the reactor-project more than three decades ago.

Der Spiegel online, 6 March 2009

CANADA: FUNDING AECL TRIPLES UNDER CONSERVATIVES

Federal funding for Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd. has tripled since the Conservative government of Stephen Harper came to power in 2006. Figures provided to The Canadian Press by Natural Resources Canada show that taxpayers will pour more than Can\$1.2 billion into the Crown corporation during the fiscal year just ending and the one set to begin April 1. The total includes \$658 million in 2008-09 and another Can\$574 million for 2009-10.

(685.5939) WISE Amsterdam - Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL) is the federal crown corporation that designs and markets CANDU reactors. In 2002, on AECL's 50th anniversary President Robert Van Adel ranted in the propagandist style of the 1950s about the "unending promise of nuclear power". Fact is that AECL is a financial basket case that in 2002 had received Can\$17.5 billion in subsidies already. (1 Can\$ is 0.79 USD and 0.60 Euro).

Since the Conservatives came to power in January 2006, the annual government stipend for AECL has averaged out to Can\$433 million a year. In the seven preceding years under

former Liberal governments, taxpayer subsidies to AECL averaged Can\$158 million a year. Adjusting for inflation, AECL subsidies are now back up to where they were when they last peaked in the mid 1980s.

Some of the funding increase relates to the production of medical isotopes and AECL's aging research reactor at Chalk River. Some is for decommissioning of the failed MAPLE reactors at Chalk River and still more is for environmental cleanup. Natural Resources Minister Lisa Raitt acknowledged that a significant part of the increased funding is targeted to help AECL develop its next-generation reactor, the ACR 1000.

Ottawa provided more than Can\$100 million last year and another Can\$135 million for 2009-10 as AECL races to complete the design that it hopes to sell to the Ontario government. "It is the vehicle on which we're bidding in the Ontario procurement competition that's going on right now," said the minister. If Ontario should choose a rival reactor design, that taxpayer investment "would have been wasted," says Bryne Purchase, a former Ontario deputy energy minister.

But Ottawa appears to be betting the ACR 1000 can win the Ontario bid and then be sold to other provincial jurisdictions, including Alberta and

Saskatchewan, and possibly abroad. In that case, the conservatives think, not only will AECL's market value have been enhanced but also the industrial spin-off benefits to Canada will be significant. "We've a very good history in Canada with respect to nuclear power," said Raitt. But skeptics point to AECL's recent fiasco over the MAPLE reactors and say increasing subsidies for another untried reactor are "ridiculous and outrageous."

The Conservative government is also sitting on a study it commissioned that reportedly recommends selling off a majority stake in AECL's commercial reactor and refurbishment business to the private sector. Critics say the

Conservatives are spending good money after bad, considering AECL's uncertain future. "Life support can be expensive, but if you're about to put the bullet in the head of the organization you have to ask yourself: Why are we doing this?" said Shawn Patrick Stensil, energy campaigner for Greenpeace Canada. Stensil and others say Ottawa is pumping up the commercial value of AECL in order to sell off the profitable parts. "I don't know if I take it as a criticism," countered Raitt.

But some industry watchers believe AECL required a cash infusion, whatever its future: "It's necessary whether they privatize it or if they don't." But Greenpeace reacts:

"There's more money down the black hole, when we could actually be building energy sources that could lower greenhouse gas emissions and create jobs in the here and now."

Sources: The Canadian Press, 10 March 2009 / "Canadian Nuclear Subsidies, Fifty Years of Futile Funding" by David Martin, Campaign for Nuclear Phase out, available at: <http://www.cnp.ca/resources/nuclear-subsidies-at-50.pdf>

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The Maple-fiasco. In May 2008, AECL suffered an embarrassing setback when it scrapped the development of two 10 MW Maple isotope-producing reactors after pouring hundreds of millions of dollars (about Can\$ 600 million) into the project. The federal crown corporation conducted tests on the reactors during the spring of 2008 and could not find a solution to a design flaw that would make the reactors more prone to a meltdown. The Maple reactors (construction started in 1992) were meant to secure Canada's dominant position in the market for medical isotopes. In the three years

before the decision alone, AECL spent more than Can\$200-million as it sought an answer to a vexing problem known as a positive power coefficient of reactivity (PCR). The reactor is supposed to have a negative coefficient of reactivity, meaning the nuclear reaction would slow down if the power in the core increased. Instead, the nuclear reaction increased with additional power, heightening the chances of a meltdown.

Globe and Mail (Can.), 16 May 2008

IN BRIEF

Crisis? What crisis!

A uranium supply crunch could be around the corner due to industry-wide cuts to development projects, rising demand, and uncertainty about Russia's plans for its decommissioned nuclear arsenal, Jerry Grandey, CEO of uranium company Cameco Corp, said on March 11. Grandey expects a situation where uranium will be in high demand because of cuts among miners left under funded due to tight credit conditions. "I think the financial crisis is clearly impacting the ability of every supplier to raise capital," he said. "When you see project cancellations, you see expansion derail, you see some projects that will just go slower. That is just simply taking away future supply and sowing the seeds of the next spike in the uranium price."

He said global mined output is 115 million pounds a year, compared with consumption of about 180 million pounds that he expects to grow at between 2 and 3 percent per year. (1 pound -lbs- is 0.45 kg) The shortfall has been made up by stockpiles, as well as annual sales of about 24 million pounds of uranium from decommissioned Russian nuclear weapons, which Cameco manages along with two partners under a 1999 commercial agreement. That deal expires in 2013, and Grandey said questions linger about how much uranium Russia may sell past that date, and how much may have degraded past the point where it can be sold. He said many expect Russian sales could fall by half.

Reuters, 11 March 2009

IAEA: vote for new Director General in March. The International Atomic Energy Agency's board of governors will vote on March 26 for a new director in a closed session. There are two nominations to succeed Mohamed ElBaradei: Japan's ambassador to the agency, Yukiya Amano, backed mainly by industrialized countries, and South Africa's Abdul Samad Minty, with core support among developing nations. In order to be appointed, a candidate must secure a two-thirds vote of the 35-member IAEA Board of Governors by secret balloting.

IAEA Director Mohamed ElBaradei, who shared the Nobel peace prize with his agency in 2005, leaves office in November after 12 years. Industrialized nations want an IAEA chief less politically outspoken than ElBaradei, sticking more to executing the IAEA's technical mandate, whose priority they see as preventing diversions of nuclear energy to bomb making.

They believe the low-key Amano would depoliticise the agency better than Minty, a former anti-apartheid activist identified with developing nation positions on disarmament. But developing nations see Amano as too close to Western powers.

Reuters, 5 March 2009 / IAEA Staff Report, 12 March 2009

EDF: Slash renewables target to protect nuclear. EDF and E.ON have warned the U.K. government they may be forced to drop plans to build a new generation of nuclear power plants unless the government scales back its targets for wind power. The demand - contained in submissions to the government's renewable energy consultation - reinforces the worries of wind developers that the two sectors cannot thrive simultaneously. Électricité de France (EDF) is calling on the government to lower its proposed renewable electricity target from 35% of supply in 2020 to just 20%. The company says building the wind capacity needed to hit a 35% target is "not realistic or indeed desirable" due to the problem of intermittency. EDF's views were revealed early March when the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) published a summary of responses to its consultation on its renewables strategy. EDF's response says that at times of high wind, output from wind and nuclear could exceed demand. "As a result... plant will need to be curtailed i.e. instructed not to generate." In reality, only nuclear will be curtailed, it says, as wind generation is subsidised so operators will pay to continue generating. The UK will also need wind farms to operate to meet its EU renewable energy target. If nuclear plants have to be regularly turned off, this "damages the economics of these projects, meaning that less will be built."

ENDS report, 12 March 2009 / Guardian, 16 March 2009

UK: Sellafield clean-up bill. Why did the U.K. government use an emergency procedure over the Sellafield clean-up bill? The dispute over whether the government followed the rules in telling parliament that it would land the taxpayer with an unlimited bill in the event of a nuclear accident at Sellafield has taken a further twist. Paul Flynn, the Labour MP for Newport West, has tabled an early day motion asking whether the indemnity covering the private owners of Sellafield is valid. Flynn has pursued two successive energy ministers, Malcolm Wicks and then Mike O'Brien, since the government used emergency procedures last summer to inform parliament that the taxpayer would foot an unlimited bill following a nuclear leak or explosion at the plant.

Wicks and O'Brien said the government had to do this because the matter was urgent. Both admit errors in not placing the details of the change in the House of Commons library so that any MP who wanted to object could raise this in parliament. They said that if they had not done this the contracts allowing a big US-led consortium to run Sellafield could not go ahead. But when a parliamentary researcher, David Lowry, tabled a freedom of information request it was revealed that civil servants knew months before they applied for an indemnity that they would have to do so - suggesting the emergency procedure was not necessary in the first place. (See also NM 682, 'In brief' and 675; 'Consortium selected for Sellafield')

Guardian (UK) blog by David Hencke, 10 March 2009

Australia: The battle for Indigenous hearts and mines. The Australian Uranium Association has launched a new strategy in an attempt to outflank continuing concern from many Indigenous Australians over the environmental and social impacts of uranium mining. The AUA is the industry's main lobby group and is comprised of many of Australia's uranium producers and explorers including resource giants BHP Billiton and Rio Tinto. It is attempting to reposition the uranium industry as a solution to widespread Indigenous poverty in remote and regional Australia and in February launched its Indigenous Dialogue Group - a twice-yearly forum of executives from five uranium companies and five Aboriginal representatives. The move has attracted sharp criticism from many Indigenous people who rearranged the acronym to spell DIG - the industry's real agenda. The Australian Nuclear Free Alliance, a network of Indigenous, environment and public health individuals and organisations formed in 1997, has condemned the move as an industry PR exercise. ANFA committee member and 2008 Nuclear Free Future Award winner Jillian Marsh stated, "It is cynical for the uranium industry to act as if it can deliver for Aboriginal people. The main lasting effect of uranium mining for Aboriginal people is radioactive waste on their country and no resources to clean up the mess left by miners."

....and more Australia: French nuclear giant Areva has a setback to its plans to develop the Koongarra uranium deposit inside Kakadu national park in the Northern Territory with traditional Aboriginal owners strongly rejecting a company application for development consent. Koongarra is fully surrounded by but not technically part of the World heritage listed Kakadu, Australia's largest national park. At a meeting in February traditional owners heard from the company and discussed the potential impacts of a large scale uranium operation near the highly visited and culturally significant Nourlangie Rock before rejecting the Areva plan and calling for the long term protection of the Koongarra region. Under the provisions of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act the decision means that there will be a five-year moratorium before Areva can again seek development consent.

Dave Sweeney, e-mail 17 March 2009

U.S. Department of Energy cannot account for nuclear materials at 15 locations.

A number of U.S. institutions with licenses to hold nuclear material reported to the Department of Energy (DOE) in 2004 that the amount of material they held were less than agency records indicated. But rather than investigating the discrepancies, Energy officials wrote off significant quantities of nuclear material from the department's inventory records. That's just one of the findings of a report released February 23 by Energy Department Inspector General Gregory Friedman that concluded "the department cannot properly account for and effectively manage its nuclear materials maintained by domestic licensees and may be unable to detect lost or stolen material."

Auditors found that Energy could not accurately account for the quantities and locations of nuclear material at 15 out of 40, or 37 percent, of facilities reviewed. The materials written off included 20,580 grams of enriched uranium, 45 grams of

plutonium, 5,001 kilograms of normal uranium and 189,139 kilograms of depleted uranium.

"Considering the potential health risks associated with these materials and the potential for misuse should they fall into the wrong hands, the quantities written off were significant," the report says. "Even in small quantities normally held by individual domestic licensees, special nuclear materials such as enriched uranium and plutonium, if not properly handled, potentially pose serious health hazards."

Auditors also found that waste-processing facilities could not locate or explain the whereabouts of significant quantities of uranium and other nuclear material that Energy Department records showed they held. In another case, Energy officials had no record of the fact that one academic institution had loaned a 32-gram plutonium-beryllium source to another institution.

Global Security Newswire, 24 February 2009

Philippines: Protest against re-commissioning Bataan increases. It seems as the Freedom from Debt Coalition (FDC) intensifies its protest over House Bill 4631 authored by Rep. Mark Cojuangco mandating the rehabilitation, re-commissioning and commercial use of the mothballed Bataan Nuclear Power Plant (BNPP). In a March 5 protest action in front of the House of Representatives and coinciding with a Committee on Appropriations hearing on the BNPP, FDC advocates wore eyeball replicas with the retina part covered with a radiation symbol to symbolize the people's vigilant watch over attempts to revive the contentious nuclear facility in Morong, Bataan through a legislative measure. "From now on, the public and the broad social movement against the revival of BNPP will keep tabs on each legislator's position, action and/or inaction on the said issue. However, special attention will be given to the 184 legislators who have rendered their support to the said bill," FDC said in a statement.

FDC said legislators should be wary of their constituents' perception concerning their support for the opening of BNPP. Through a sustained information and education campaign, their constituents are being made aware of the dangers of the BNPP and its enormous weight on the economic life of the people should the bill be passed into law. The group also warned legislators vying for re-election in 2010 that support for the BNPP revival bill, without first understanding the dangers of the nuclear power plant from reliable scientific study could be a "kiss of death" come election day.

For more on the anti-Bataan campaign: <http://notobnpp.wordpress.com/>

Press release Free from Debt Coalition, 5 March 2009

EDF in antitrust spotlight.

On March 11, investigators from the European Commission raided the offices of Électricité de France (EDF) seeking evidence of price-fixing in the French electricity market.

Commission officials were joined by inspectors from the French Competition Authority in a raid on the utility's headquarters in Paris. The Commission said that it suspected that EDF was engaged in activity that abused its dominant position in the market. "The suspected illegal conduct may include actions to raise prices on the French wholesale electricity market," it said.

The state-controlled company generates and supplies most of the electricity used in France, while also controlling the transmission grid operator RTE. The primary sources for EDF's electricity is a fleet of 58 nuclear reactors, while other sources include hydro and gas. A "true internal energy market" is a main goal of European energy policy, as is a minimum of 10% interconnection between national grids and further separation of power generation and transmission.

The Times, 12 March 2009 / WNN, 12 March 2009

Germany wide protest against RWE and Belene. From 1 to 8 March, protests took place in 54 German towns against the construction of the nuclear power station Belene in North Bulgaria. The protests focus on RWE, because Germany's second largest energy company wants to invest over 1,5 Billion Euros into the nuclear power plant on the shores of the Danube. With the week of protest, environmental groups want to commemorate the large 1977 earthquake in the Belene region. During that quake, only several kilometres from the planned nuclear site blocks of flats collapsed and over 120 people were killed.

"Nuclear power stations have no place in an earthquake zone," comments Schuecking and points out that the European Seismological Commission predicts medium to heavy earthquakes for the Belene region. According to estimates of the environmental organisation, Belene is one of the most dangerous nuclear power stations currently planned in Europe.

Protest actions took place against RWE and some of their important shareholders. In the Ruhr region and Westphalia protesters picketed in front of RWE client centres. In municipalities that are shareholders of RWE and whose mayors have a seat in the RWE board, protests were held in front of town halls. In Southern and Northern German, protests concentrated on the Allianz insurance company, which is with almost 5% the single largest German shareholder in RWE.

Urgewald, press release, 3 March 2009 / www.ausgestrahlt.de

WISE/NIRS NUCLEAR MONITOR

The Nuclear Information & Resource Service was founded in 1978 and is based in Washington, US. The World Information Service on Energy was set up in the same year and houses in Amsterdam, Netherlands. NIRS and WISE Amsterdam joined forces in 2000, creating a worldwide network of information and resource centers for citizens and environmental organizations concerned about nuclear power, radioactive waste, radiation, and sustainable energy issues.

The WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor publishes international information in English 20 times a year. A Spanish translation of this newsletter is available on the WISE Amsterdam website (www.antenna.nl/wise/esp). A Russian version is published by WISE Russia and a Ukrainian version is published by WISE Ukraine. The WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor can be obtained both on paper and in an email version (pdf format). Old issues are (after two months) available through the WISE Amsterdam homepage: www.antenna.nl/wise.

Receiving the WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor

US and Canada based readers should contact NIRS for details of how to receive the Nuclear Monitor (address see page 11). Others receive the Nuclear Monitor through WISE Amsterdam.

For individuals and NGOs we ask a minimum annual donation of 100 Euros (50 Euros for the email version). Institutions and industry should contact us for details of subscription prices.

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Nuclear Monitor needs more contributors

The Nuclear Monitor exists for more than three decades already. In 1978 the first issue was produced, although it was called "The WISE News Communiqué" at that time.

Since 1978 many things have changed, but to produce 20 issues of the magazine annually is still a struggle. And equally important for that matter. Our readers (you) value both quality and quantity.

The Nuclear Monitor is produced by a very small group of people. We do not pay for articles being written for us, we never did and it's hard to imagine we ever will. But that small group is looking for some help.

In short: we are looking for people, especially in Asia and Africa, but also in Australia and the America's, who are willing to write about local and regional developments concerning (anti-) nuclear issues.

We think that currently the content of the magazine leans too much on West-European sources and contributors. To have a more balanced and global perspective, we need people with knowledge of, and access to, non-English and/or non-German sources and background. There are so many things we are not aware of, even in this digital highway day and age. It is simply not enough to read all the wires from the big agencies, we want the stories from the ground, the grassroots fighting the nuclear industry, the reports of actions and campaigns, the incidents and accidents that not make it to the mainstream media, the analysis no-one wants to make because they are 'too difficult'

So, if you want to contribute - be it regularly or sporadic- to the Nuclear Monitor, or want to become more involved in the (production) of the magazine please contact WISE-Amsterdam at wiseamster@antenna.nl

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