

pany's Spanish affiliate. (Spain is not an NPT signer either.) The U.S. company, Edlow International, has acted as broker for the sale of French enriched uranium fuel for two South African plants built by the French company, and former Westinghouse subsidiary, Framatome.

Sen. Gary Hart and Rep. Richard Ottinger recently introduced legislation that would close this particular loophole and otherwise strengthen existing nonproliferation legislation. Charging the Reagan administration with "an utterly irresponsible approach to the proliferation issue," Hart claims the bill, entitled the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act Amendments of 1982, is designed to directly counter several steps either being taken or under consideration by the administration. "The administration has a stated policy of making this nation a 'reliable nuclear supplier.' But without proper safeguards, we will wind up becoming a reliable supplier of the tools for our own annihilation," explains Hart.

Although it is doubtful the bill will see congressional action this session, it may be the basis for hearings and will be a rallying point for the few legislators and many national organizations and citizens' groups concerned with the dangers of nuclear proliferation.

If international safeguards make the control of plutonium difficult now, recent government moves toward allowing the use of commercially produced plutonium in nuclear weapons systems would completely wipe away the 30-year-old illusion of distance between "peaceful" nuclear power and military weapons programs.

Reagan Bids for Weapons Link

Last fall the Reagan administration dropped a political bombshell when it proposed that the Department of Energy solve a supposed plutonium shortage by "mining" nuclear plant waste. By reprocessing commercial spent fuel, tons of plutonium could be recovered for the nuclear weapons systems being planned. A new laser isotope-separation process would isolate the valuable plutonium-239 from other plutonium isotopes.

International reaction was swift. Sigvard Eklund, director-general of the IAEA, was reportedly "aghast." He warned a visiting DOE team that such a move could unleash a new wave of European hostility toward nuclear energy in countries such as his native Sweden. It would also threaten the continued peaceful use of the atom worldwide, opening still wider the door to nuclear weapons proliferation.

If this "plutonium connection" were to be made, the link between power plants and weapons would be forever welded. In a surprisingly decisive vote, the Senate overwhelmingly approved an amendment by Sens. Hart, Simpson, and Mitchell that would ban the use of plutonium from commercial nuclear plants in nuclear weapons. Although the amendment was accepted 88-9 by the Senate, and is expected to be accepted by the House and enacted into law, funding continues for the laser isotope-separation research. The story of this plutonium connection is by no means over.

Increasingly, there seems to be little rationale left for isolating plutonium besides a desire to make nuclear weapons. The breeder reactor, once the hoped-for source of limitless energy, has run into political, economic, and technical problems in every country that's tried it. This country's own Clinch River Breeder Reactor project is floundering after 10 years and \$1 billion. A May 1982 General Accounting Office report critical of Clinch River cited problems in British, French, and earlier U.S. breeder efforts, and called the current breeder project prone to component failure, and financially risky.

A Plutonium Freeze

Paul Leventhal, once staff director of the Senate's nuclear regulations subcommittee and now president of the Washington-based Nuclear Control (formerly the Nuclear Club, Inc.), urges a complete freeze on plutonium production. "Given the obvious limitations of safeguards and the hazards of plutonium, it would seem logical and prudent to ban plutonium as a fuel before the world is awash in the stuff. This is perfectly feasible. Neither research reactors nor utilities need plutonium fuel. A nuclear weapons freeze by the superpowers would be incomplete unless accompanied by a plutonium freeze worldwide," wrote Leventhal in a recent editorial in the *Los Angeles Times*.

Even without the "plutonium connection," nuclear power poses en-

Union Support

There has been increasing labor opposition to nuclear power, much of it based on awareness of nuclear's economic costs and the job-producing potential of conservation, solar, and alternative technologies. Two national labor conferences for safe energy and full employment, one held in Pittsburgh in 1980, the other in Gary, Indiana, in November 1981 strongly supported this view. At the first meeting, members and officials from 38 national unions took a strong antinuclear plant stand, but refused to oppose nuclear weapons. But, in an early indication of the anti-arms race sentiment that was beginning to sweep the country, attendees at the following year's conference enthusiastically endorsed a stand against nuclear weapons as well as plants. "Nuclear means

A typical nuclear power plant produces in its radioactive waste by-products between 300 and 500 pounds of plutonium a year, or enough for about 25 to 40 Nagasaki-type weapons.

vironmental, social and economic costs that make it unacceptable in both its civilian and military forms. Uranium mining and milling, dominated by multinationals like Rio Tinto Zinc, Union Carbide, Exxon, and other oil/energy conglomerates, creates severe environmental and health problems for both miners and surrounding communities. Most uranium is located on native lands, with large deposits in the southwestern U.S., Canada, and Australia. In Namibia, Rio Tinto Zinc sells yellowcake from the world's largest open-pit mine to, among others, the U.S. and Britain, in contravention of U.N. Decree I of 1974.

Australia. In Namibia, Rio Tinto Zinc sells yellowcake from the world's largest open-pit mine to, among others, the U.S. and Britain, in contravention of U.N. Decree I of 1974. The South-West African People's Organization (SWAPO) opposes uranium mining as a fundamentally antisocial activity. In the U.S., the International Indian Treaty Council, Women of All Red Nations, and the American Indian Movement made a recent statement of solidarity with the "liberation forces of South Africa" specifically on the subject of uranium mining, which poses severe dangers to their people. Native peoples and other uranium opponents have met to exchange information and strategies at several international conferences, but their impact thus far has been limited.

From the uranium mill the radioactive element moves on to be enriched for either reactor fuel or nuclear weapons use. Union Carbide, the uranium miner and miller that has long operated the government's enrichment and other facilities at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, recently announced that it will quit its operations there. Another company involved in both the commercial and military sectors of the atomic business is General Electric, the largest manufacturer of reactors built in the U.S. (Westinghouse dominates the foreign market).

The workplaces created by these nuclear corporations are dangerous, exposing workers to potentially hazardous levels of radiation. Cases of worker health problems and studies of atomic worker health can be found in *Killing Our Own: The Disaster of America's Experience with Atomic Radiation* by Wasserman, Solomon, et al. (Delta, 1982). The hazards to workers are essentially the same in both commercial and military facilities, although commercial ones, regulated by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, are under more public scrutiny.

nuclear, whether it's power or weapons," said mineworker Donnie Constock at the Gary conference.

People opposed to nuclear power and weapons in this country are more and more talking and voting for conversion of precious economic and human resources away from war efforts to socially useful production. Certainly the safe energy movement has, with its labor allies, urged the retraining of nuclear workers in other energy technologies. But the Reagan administration remains more dedicated to nuclear power and weapons than ever. The Department of Energy, which used to make at least token efforts at solar and conservation, has gutted these programs, and is now almost completely geared to nuclear weapons and power. If the administration has its way, 65 percent of the "energy" budget will go to atomic weapons programs. Of the remaining energy funds, 87 percent will be poured into nuclear fission and fusion development.

Clearly turning away from either form of the atom will be a major political feat, both in this country and internationally. But the situation we find ourselves in now did not happen overnight. It took 30 years of atomic seamanship and statesmanship. To reverse the nuclear tide will also take time. A starting point is the realization that there is no such thing as "peaceful" nuclear power.

The evidence that commercial nuclear power is no substitute for oil is growing daily. Expensive, subject to unplanned outages and accidents, nuclear power is a fragile and dangerous technology on which to base developing society. Much more efficient, economical, and ecological are the appropriate technologies based on available resources in a given region. Much work has been done in this area. Now what is needed is the political vision, commitment, and power to make the non-nuclear future a reality.

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