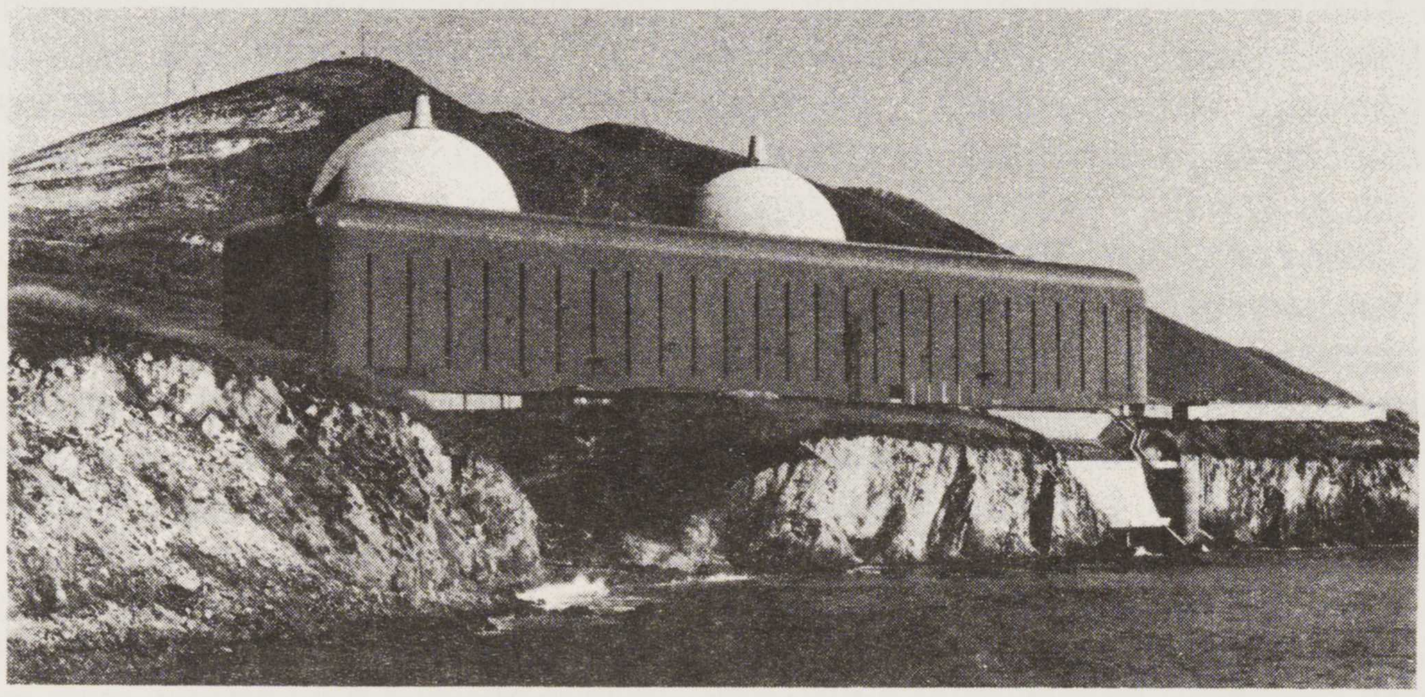
What You Should Know About The Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant



INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 1966, the Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E), the nation's second largest privately-owned utility, announced plans to build a nuclear power plant. The site was to be 12 miles southwest of San Luis Obispo, California, at Diablo Canyon, a beautiful and previously unspoiled part of the Pacific Ocean coastline, best known for its majestic scenery and its extensive forest of rare pygmy live oaks. PG&E later announced that the plant would consist of two large electricity-generating units and would be constructed at a cost of $350 million.[1] Unit 1 of the Diablo plant was to be "on line" by 1973.[2] But, by March 1978, the utility had spent $1.4 billion and the plant was still unfinished. Final licensing hearings will probably occur in late 1978.

SUMMARY

The Diablo Canyon Nuclear Plant is located only two and a half miles from a major, newly discovered, and active earthquake fault. Serious doubts exist about the plant's earthquake resistance, it's overall safety, and it's cost. Pacific Gas and Electric Company's (PG&E) original estimate of $350 million for the plant has risen to $1.4 billion, a "slight" cost overrun of $1.06 billion. Clearly, the utility does not wish to lose its investment despite risks to the public. Some citizens have charged PG&E with misleading people about Diablo Canyon's true economic, social, and environmental impacts. Although five years behind schedule, the Diablo Canyon plant is not yet licensed to operate. Licensing of the plant is opposed by the people who must bear the cost and the risk of plant operations if it opens.

Should Diablo Canyon be allowed to operate in view of the hazards it presents to public health, safety, and economic welfare?

CLARIFICATION

When the term "Pacific Gas and Electric Company" or "PG&E" is used, the author wishes to designate only those persons responsible for making and carrying out policy decisions for the utility at the highest level. It is those persons with whom we have a disagreement. I in no way wish or intend to indict the many persons working for PG&E in some other capacity.