

Wisconsin Should Look To Clean Energy Sources

By Joseph Mangano

The Wisconsin Legislature is considering AB 346, a proposal that would end restrictions on building new nuclear reactors in the state. Some legislators want to revoke the 1983 law, viewing nuclear as a clean source of electricity because they do not release greenhouse gases.

But nuclear reactors are far from clean, creating huge amounts of more than 100 radioactive chemicals — the same toxic mix found in fallout clouds from atomic bomb tests years ago. Some of these chemicals disappear quickly, but others last many years and must be kept from humans. Nuclear waste was supposed to be stored at a permanent site by now, but the federal government's selection of Yucca Mountain in Nevada has been slowed due to safety concerns. Many believe Yucca will never open.

In the meantime, each nuclear reactor must store the equivalent of hundreds of Hiroshima bombs indefinitely. Radioactivity in the reactor's core and waste pools must be constantly controlled with cooling water to avoid a meltdown. Mechanical errors like those at Chernobyl or an act of sabotage like the Sept. 11 attacks could bring a radiation catastrophe.

A meltdown would release a huge mass of radioactive gases and particles into the air, which would be propelled by winds and inhaled by humans. Safe evacuation would be impossible, and many thousands would suffer from radiation poisoning or cancer.

Nuclear Disorder ... ?

Book review by Chuck Baynton

The Lawyer's Committee on Nuclear Policy, the Western States Legal Foundation and Reaching Critical Will have published *Nuclear Disorder or Cooperative Security*, an extraordinarily timely warning alluding to events as recent as March 2007. The new book is a friendly critique of the Blix Commission's *Weapons of Terror*.

In 2003, Swedish diplomat and former weapons inspector Hans Blix took on an assignment proposed by the Swedish government to produce a new study of how nuclear, chemical and biological weapons might be abolished.

Similar work had been done before but Blix and his sponsors believed that the time was ripe for a renewed effort to eliminate weapons of mass destruction. Blix assembled an expert commission made up of former diplomats, foreign ministers and cabinet secretaries. He issued its report, *Weapons of Terror: Freeing the World of Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Arms*, in June 2006. It made 60 recommendations, 30 of which relate to nuclear weapons.

Happily, *Nuclear Disorder or Cooperative Security* requires no specialized knowledge. The book is information-dense and carefully argued, and extensive notes and a bibliography complement the text.

A principal message of this book is that we need better modes of thought, and in that spirit the authors reject the term "weapons of mass destruction" in favor of nuclear, biological, chemical or NBC weapons. The new acronym avoids trivializing H-bombs or treating the three military systems as equal in destructiveness.

Of four main sections of text, the concluding one on the role of civil society is largely devoted to critiquing other dangerous mental constructs including "nuclear deterrence" and "national security," in which the first is commonly seen as the path to the second. Critiquing these ideas is vital to our security. It needed doing and *Nuclear Disorder* does it well.

The first three sections include a menu of steps that disarmament organizations and most of the world's governments have advocated for decades, generally with little success because of resistance by the nuclear powers.

The authors rightly point to the increasingly dubious legitimacy of the UN Security Council as presently structured. Among other problems, the first five nuclear-armed states are the five veto-wielding permanent Security Council members. Their perennial message on nuclear weapons is "Do as I say, not as I do." Non-nuclear-armed states are keenly aware of the self-contradiction, and North Americans need to wake up to it.

Nuclear Disorder also sounds a note of caution on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), whose entry into force has been delayed for years by lack of ratification by the U.S. and a few others.

CTBT entry into force is properly high on everyone's list of steps toward the abolition of nuclear weapons. However, in one possible scenario, the U.S. might ratify in a public show of commitment to nuclear abolition, while cynically using computer power to further refine weapons designs, in the belief that no others have that advanced capability.

The best summary of all this is the final paragraph of the book's introduction:

"*Nuclear Disorder or Cooperative Security* delves into complex aspects of the 60-year nuclear age and how to bring it to a close. But the fundamental point is this: the U.S. must end its reliance on nuclear weapons and work to bring about their global elimination."

Chuck Baynton is on the Executive Committee of Wisconsin Network for Peace and Justice and chairs the Disarmament Committee of Peace Action Wisconsin.

Nuclear Disorder or Cooperative Security is available from The Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission, www.wmdreport.org for \$15.

In Wisconsin, three reactors at the Kewaunee and Point Beach sites (five miles apart) near Green Bay are still operating. At 33, 35 and 37 years old, they are among the oldest in the United States. Their parts are corroding, raising the chance of a meltdown. A recent report cited seven "near miss" meltdowns at the reactors since 2001, more than any other U.S. reactor. In addition, in 2004 - 05, they were closed more than 21 percent of the time for repairs, double the U.S. average of 10 percent.

The Kewaunee and Point Beach reactors are approaching the end of their license period of 40 years (reactor parts were not expected to last more than 40 years without problems). But recently, federal regulators extended the two Point Beach licenses for another 20 years and are soon expected to do the same for Kewaunee. Keeping aging reactors running adds more radioactivity to plants and the environment.

In the past, Kewaunee and Point Beach may have harmed local residents, since all reactors must routinely release a portion of radioactivity into the air. Humans ingest it through breathing and the food chain raising the risk of cancer, especially in the young.

Most of the 370,000 residents of Brown, Door, Kewaunee and Manitowoc counties live within 35 miles of Kewaunee and Point Beach. There are no obvious health risks in this area. The percent of non-English speakers and poverty rate are below Wisconsin averages, while educational achievement is similar.

In the past quarter-century, the local death rate for infants, children and adolescents for all causes is three percent below the rest of Wisconsin but 36 percent greater for cancer. With 171 local youngsters dying of cancer since 1979, this pattern is statistically significant. Are radioactive emissions from local reactors to blame? Many factors can contribute to cancer — including radioactivity — and the matter deserves further study.

Given the concerns raised by reactors, it would be sound policy to keep the pre-conditions on new reactors. Because the 20 percent of the state's electricity produced by (the relatively old and small) Kewaunee and Point Beach reactors will be lost when they eventually close, a clean energy program should be pursued.

This should include conservation, efficient products and safe/renewable energy sources. In particular, wind power — the fastest-growing source of energy — could be developed offshore to serve the many Wisconsin residents living along Lake Michigan.

Joseph Mangano, Executive Director of the Radiation and Public Health Project, a research and education group based in New York, wrote this article for the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel.

Uranium Weapons updates

Activists Target DU Profiteers

Activists around the world united Nov. 6 — International DU Action Day — in confronting banks and other financial institutions profiting from uranium munitions production.

In Minneapolis and Edina, Minnesota, Nukewatch and AlliantACTION volunteers distributed leaflets at two US Bank sites, condemning its \$11.25 million investment in the Minnesota-based Alliant Techsystems, the country's biggest producer of uranium weapons.

The same day, the International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons (ICBUW), Netwerk Vlaanderen and Bank Track issued a global call for disinvestment in uranium weapons production by unveiling their report, "Too Risky for Business," a 29-page dossier detailing the investments of Wall Street banks and other firms around the world profiting from the dirty business and by how much. For the full report, see <www.bandedpleteduranium.org/en/docs/32.pdf>

United Nations Moves to Confront DU

On Oct. 31, the United Nations First Committee on Disarmament and International Security passed by an overwhelming majority a resolution calling on member states to investigate the effects of the military use of depleted uranium weapons.

The armor-piercing shells made of toxic and radioactive uranium-238 are used extensively by the U.S. and Britain having fired hundreds of tons of them into Iraq in 1991 and 2003, into Afghanistan in 2001 and lesser amounts into Bosnia in 1995 and Kosovo in 1999.

The UN resolution entitled "Effects of the Use of Armaments and Ammunitions Containing Depleted Uranium," passed 122 to 6 with 35 abstentions. Only the Czech Republic, France, Israel, The Netherlands, Britain and the U.S. voted "no." If the weapons are as benign as the Pentagon and the State Department assert, an internationally recognized analysis of the weapons effects should be welcomed by them.

The resolution asks that member states and international NGOs submit a report to the UN General Assembly next year. It says in part:

"The General Assembly...

"Convinced that as humankind is more aware of the need to take immediate measures to protect the environment, any event that could jeopardize such efforts requires urgent attention to implement the required measures,



Stop the Biggest Taxpayer Giveaway to the Nuclear Industry in History

Graham Nash, Bonnie Raitt and Jackson Browne (L. to R. above) have gone to bat against a proposed bailout of the nuclear industry contained in a new Energy Bill. The plan would give \$50 billion in tax incentives and loan guarantees to the nuclear reactor ownership class. Working with *Beyond Nuclear*, a project of the Nuclear Policy Research Institute in Tacoma Park, Maryland, the three activist singer/songwriters, along with Keb' Mo', Ben Harper and others, have produced a music video — a reworking of "For What It's Worth" — condemning the hand-out and urging political action. To help stop the giant subsidy (\$25 billion in 2008; \$25 billion in 2009) see the BeyondNuclear.org website.

Here are a few things you can do right away:

*Call your Representatives and Senators at (202) 224-3121 or (202) 225-3121. Tell them you don't want your tax dollars squandered on new nuclear power reactors.

*Sign the MUSE (Musicians United for Safe Energy) petition that says "No" to the \$50 billion handout.

*Tell your friends and family to call their senators and representatives.

*Get informed. Read the five excellent new fact sheets at the *Beyond Nuclear* website.

*Reach the media. Use the sample letters to the editor and op/ed pieces posted at *Beyond Nuclear's* website to write your own, and submit them to your local newspapers.

*Check out <www.nukefree.org/> for more information about the \$50 billion nuclear power boondoggle.

"Taking into consideration the potential harmful effects of the use of armaments and ammunitions containing depleted uranium on human health and the environment,

"Requests the Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States and relevant international organizations on the effects of the use of armaments and ammunitions containing depleted uranium, and to submit a report on this subject to the General Assembly at its sixty-third session."

The UN First Committee is one of only five major committees that conduct UN business.

The vote came after a year of intense campaigning by the ICBUW and the Campaign Against Depleted Uranium in Manchester, Britain, and follows four resolutions by the European Parliament calling for a ban. The UN action also comes on the heels of the first national ban on the manufacture, production, sale or use of uranium weapons, adopted unanimously last March by Belgium's Parliament.



AlliantACTION's Steve Clemens (L) and Nukewatch's John LaForge offered DU disinvestment information to customers Nov. 6 outside US Bank's Edina, Minn. branch as the assistant manager ordered them to leave.

The magazine New Internationalist has devoted half its November edition to a comprehensive investigation of uranium weapons. It includes a Nukewatch account of Minnesota jury trial victories over Alliant Tech trespass charges. Send us \$10 for a copy of this superb primer (postage and handling included).