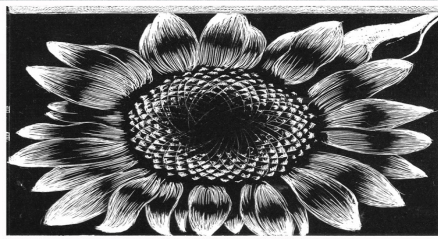


NUKEWATCH

QUARTERLY



A publication of the Progressive Foundation — ISSN 1942-6305 — Winter 2024-25
News & Information on Nuclear Weapons, Power, Waste, and Nonviolent Resistance

Protesters Vow to Shut Down Xcel's Monticello Nuclear Reactor

Editor's Note: Nukewatch is a founding member of the Coalition for a Nuclear-Free Mississippi River which held its first rally to commemorate the two-year anniversary of the most recent tritium leak at Xcel's Monticello nuclear reactor at the Xcel Energy offices in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Ta Pe'juta Wi'chac'pi Win, Erica Crazy Hawk (Star Medicine Woman), member of the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe and Indigenous Earth Protectors, said of the radioactive leak that reached the Mississippi River and Bdote, the sacred Dakota site of creation: "We were driven from this sacred ground through genocide, a tragedy echoing in places like Palestine today. Now, to see these waters and lands poisoned with radiation adds another layer of unbearable desecration. It is my heartfelt prayer that someone will rise to the occasion and make the morally correct decision and action."

By Sarah Martin

MINNEAPOLIS — On Thursday, November 21, 50 members of the newly formed Coalition for a Nuclear-free Mississippi River and their supporters rallied in front of Xcel Energy headquarters on Nicollet Mall in the heart of downtown. They demanded the energy company keep to its 2030 shutdown date for the Monticello nuclear reactor because of serious threats posed to public health, the Mississippi River, and drinking water for millions.

As rush hour traffic passed by, motorists and pedestrians saw protesters holding signs reading, "Don't nuke our river." Chants like "Xcel let's be clear, Monticello reactor is not wanted here" were loudly amplified by the surrounding buildings. After chanting for a half hour, demonstrators heard from several speakers.

George Crocker, executive director of the North America Water Office and longtime anti-nuke activist, said, "We're here today because Xcel Energy wants to continue nuclear operations at Monticello until 2050, and that is a really bad idea for a long list of rea-



Ta Pe'juta Wi'chac'pi Win, Erica Crazy Hawk (Star Medicine Women), member of the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe and Indigenous Earth Protectors, at the Rally at Xcel Energy offices in Minneapolis. Photo: Kelly Lundeen

sons. There's equipment failure issues, like what's going on now after a pipe corroded to pieces and almost a million gallons of [water contaminated with] radioactive tritium leaked into the environment, some of which is now contaminating Minneapolis drinking water. The potential for cataclysmic equipment failure is not diminutive, and it is mounting as reactor components age. There's nuclear waste issues, as there is no known technology or location capable of isolating irradiated fuel and other radioactively contaminated material from Earth's biosphere for the required geological periods of time."

John LaForge, longtime activist with Nukewatch, spoke about the dangerous radioactive leaks at the reactor and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and media misinformation, stating, "Over and over, Xcel and the NRC told the press that the radioactive tritium did not and could not reach drinking water. They lied, but the media dutifully repeated this lie many times on the radio, in the papers, on television. Any of the reporters could have found out that all the groundwater under the reactor moves toward the Mississippi — drinking water for 20 million people."

LaForge continued, "The record is clear, but Xcel's and the NRC's public statements have been lies. Nothing they say to the press should be believed. As a coalition, we must see to it that the reactor's 2030 expiration date be enforced, and that this leaky, dangerous, accident-prone nuclear jalopy be permanently shut."

Whitney Wildman of the Climate Justice Committee stated, "We stand with groups organizing to shut down the Monticello Nuclear plant because we know that we can't trust giant corporations to operate with the people's health and safety in mind because that's not their priority. We know that under capitalism these companies plan to exploit the land and its people to the breaking point, all in the name of profits."

The program concluded with a lively, creative street theater piece depicting the cozy and alarming relationship between the NRC and the officials at the Monticello nuclear power reactor.

The coalition held a teach-in on the dangers of the Monticello reactor and nuclear power on December 4 at the New City Center in Minneapolis.

— Published by Fight Back! News, Nov. 25, 2024
— See www.SaveTheMississippi.com, for more on the Coalition for a Nuclear-Free Mississippi River. Sign the petition to stop the license extension for the Monticello nuclear reactor.



The new B61-12 thermonuclear bomb, soon to replace current B61s at NATO bases in Europe. Photo: U.S. Air Force.

NATO's Own Nuclear Threats Against Russia

By John LaForge

Western media reports every alarming statement from Russian President Putin and his commanders regarding their nuclear attack readiness. NATO's nuclear weapons threats are never demonized in the same terms even though the alliance's commanders' readiness to launch their nuclear weapons is just as provocative, destabilizing, and potentially suicidal as Russia's.

A case in point is NATO's annual nuclear attack rehearsal known as "Steadfast Noon," which ran from October 14 to 24 this year and involved thirteen NATO states, more than 60 warplanes from eight NATO air bases, and approximately 2,000 military personnel. NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte said in an October 11 announcement, "Nuclear deterrence is the cornerstone of allied security," and "Steadfast Noon ... sends a clear message to any adversary that NATO will protect and defend all allies."

The complicated role-play of a NATO nuclear attack on Russia was coordinated to run simultaneously with the large-scale British-led maritime maneuver known as "Strike Warrior," which was spearheaded by a British aircraft carrier "strike group" off the coast of Scotland. Thomas Newdick reported for The War Zone, on October 25, that "The combined drills sent a powerful message to Russia."

Another powerful message — don't call it a nuclear threat — was sent to Russia by Col. Daniel Bunch, Chief of Nuclear Operations for SHAPE, the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, in Belgium. Col. Bunch said that coordinating the nuclear practice is "literally down to the minute of when we would put a weapon onto a target." SHAPE said in the same announcement at the conclusion of the exercise that "Steadfast Noon offers a realistic training." This is as bold and direct a threat to use nuclear weapons as anything President Putin has ever made.

Countries involved in the war games were the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Poland, Romania, Turkey, and the United Kingdom. The Royal Netherlands Air Force debuted newly purchased F-35A fighter jets. The jets have recently been "certified" to carry new B61-12 air-dropped H-bombs which are soon to be transferred from the U.S. to five NATO states, replacing older B61s.



Protesters outside of Xcel Energy offices in Minneapolis denounce the handling of a leak of 829,000 gallons of radioactive tritium water that contaminated Mississippi River drinking water. Photo: Bonnie Urfer