

On Guard! The Nuclear Industry is Up to Tricks Again

Opinion by Kelly Lundeen

A few short years ago the nuclear renaissance was a dream crushed by the reality of Fukushima’s melt-down, the ever-rising costs of licensing and constructing an operational reactor, and the increasing availability of more affordable renewable energy sources. Yet, the clever nuclear establishment has finagled a way to assure its preservation despite all common sense. Against this well-connected, highly-subsidized industry, the forces of truth, environmental justice, science, ethics, and ecological sustainability have a bigger challenge than ever to confront. This year’s vast giveaways and unabashed promotion of nuclear power have been the culmination of its proponents’ effective campaign on Capitol Hill.

How did they get away with it? As the nuclear power industry was facing an existential threat, its lobby machine and a few extremely wealthy backers found a new way to present itself, this time in environmentally friendly, sustainable wrapping paper.

Let’s look at the most recent wave of welfare. In 2016 reactors started getting bailed out in the billions of dollars at the state level after the industry newly labelled itself as “green.” Then in 2021 the federal government stepped in with the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), followed by the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (IRA), both of which were touted as major climate bills. Nuclear Information and Resource Service analyzed the bills and revealed the quantity of funding dedicated to the promotion of nuclear energy. The IIJA provided a whopping \$11 billion for nuclear. The IRA went fiscally berserk and lavished the industry with a \$134 billion handout.

In March 2024, the perpetrators of radioactive violence were gifted once again with the reauthorization of the Price-Anderson Act. This allows the nuclear industry to continue to freely produce the most toxic and dangerous catastrophes known to humankind

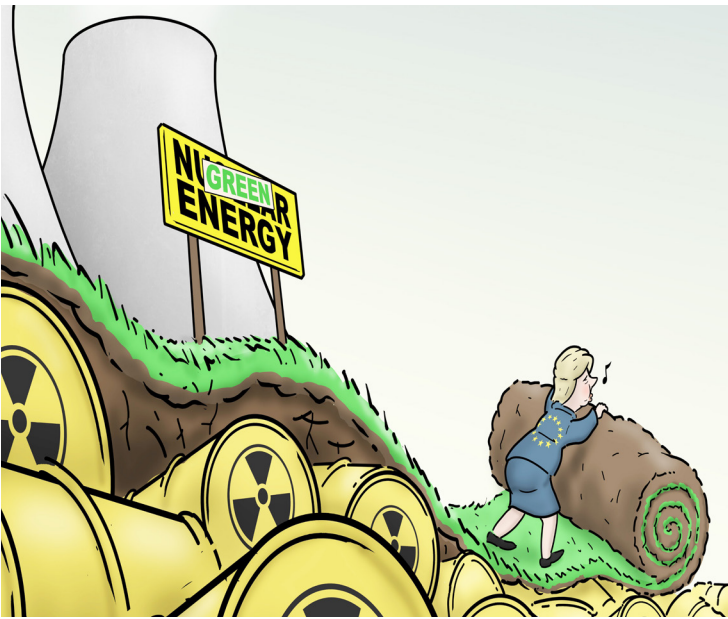
without the burden of covering the cost of hundreds of billions of dollars per accident.

In June the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) expired after 34 years of providing necessary compensation for certain groups of people affected by radiation exposure. Extending Price-Anderson and ending RECA gave the industry a green light to continue poisoning air, water, and the food chain knowing there will be no consequences to the polluters and no compensation for the survivors.

Just when the industry thought it couldn’t get any better, they hit a grand slam with the passage of the Accelerating Deployment of Versatile, Advanced Nuclear for Clean Energy (ADVANCE) Act in July. While the implications of this sweeping bill are yet to be tested, Congress is forcing the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to rewrite its mission statement to include promoting nuclear power in addition to its current goal of protecting the health and safety of the public and the environment. The bill’s backers hope it further degrades NRC authority by fast-tracking reactor licensing and small modular nuclear reactor development and weakening safety and security oversight.

As nightmares of Fukushima have now faded, the nuclear industry’s dreams may come true: extending licenses of decrepit nuclear reactors to 80 years, reviving closed reactors, and starting up new reactors. If so, it will mean more uranium mining, more destruction of land, more radioactive transport, more radioactive releases and accidents along the entire fuel chain, more high-level radioactive waste, more money in the pockets of the already-rich, more energy consumption, and less renewable energy.

Which way will it go: common sense protection of the Earth and its inhabitants or a bottomless



tax-payer charity for private industry with no questions asked? The answers remain partly with a new administration — eager to promote fossil fuels but in favor of all things nuclear and very inclined to deregulate — and partly with the resilience of our anti-nuclear movement. — NRC, July 2024; Beyond Nuclear, Mar. 2024; NIRS “Summary of New Federal Incentives for Nuclear Energy,” 2022

Are We at War with Russia?

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the U.S. and its NATO subordinates are directly involved in attacks within Russia.

Russia did not respond with nuclear weapons but had a surprise of its own — a new kind of fearsome intermediate-range missile (thankfully, not carrying nuclear weapons this time), the Oreshnik, which it tested by firing into Ukraine as a message.

With things escalating, we should not forget that in 2026, the U.S. already planned to have conventional intermediate-range missiles in Germany that could reach Russia. The U.S. also maintains, in five European countries, tactical weapons that it is currently modernizing. Political leaders have talked recklessly about the use of nuclear weapons, and the U.S. doesn’t have a No-First-Use nuclear policy, meaning it could make a pre-emptive nuclear attack.

Ritter and former CIA senior analyst Ray McGovern, along with another member of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity, Coleen Rowley, assert that we are now uniquely in danger of imminent nuclear war.

Our country is doubling down on hegemonic dominance through military might, in addition to economic muscle (sanctions) as its way of interacting in the world while power shifts to the Global South and begins to evade U.S. control. The U.S. approach of refusing to cooperate and share power in the world is disastrous, causing death and destruction wherever it goes. Not only did it sacrifice Ukraine by waging war, it failed in its strategic purpose of wearing down and weakening Russia, regarded as a competitor, and, as an unintended consequence, succeeded in wearing down and weakening European countries instead.

Within the U.S., hope lies in the power of people acting together. At this time, when it’s needed more than ever, we can build a broad anti-nuclear and peace movement. There is much to build on because people are aware of many issues and already have experience with action. Rallies to protect Native lands and immigrant rights persist. Systemic, racist police killings like George Floyd’s and the horror of genocide in Gaza awakened the conscience of the public. New energy comes from youth, students, and young families who have been raising their refreshing voices in the streets, on campuses, and in creative ways, joining long-time activists. Washington hawks say they are unduly influenced by Russian bots and Chinese TikTok. But what really worries the censors is that these young people are seeing what systems of global domination and domestic oppression do and they want change.

— Mary Beaudoin edits the newsletter for Women Against Military Madness, whose mission is to oppose U.S. militarism and involvement in wars.

Canada’s Nuclear Waste Management Targets Site for Deep Geological Repository

Canada’s Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) announced November 28 that it had chosen the Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation and the Township of Ignace in northwest Ontario as the future site for Canada’s Deep Geological Repository (DGR) for the abandonment of all of Canada’s high-level radioactive waste reactor fuel.

The site is north of Lake Superior, 90 miles northeast of Minnesota’s Voyageurs National Park and 150 miles north of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

The NWMO’s public announcement does not mention that the “not-for-profit” NWMO is wholly owned by the three radioactive waste-producing utilities in Canada. These NWMO owners profit indirectly from Canada’s willingness to take possession and accept liability for the deadly, long-lived industrial waste material that was profitably produced by private corporations for decades.

The small town of Ignace (population 1,200) has given its consent for NWMO to build a DGR at the Revell Lake area. However, the Indigenous community of Wabigoon First Nation (population 800) has only agreed to study the proposal, announcing on November 18, “The yes vote does not signify approval of the project; rather, it demonstrates the Nation’s willingness to enter the next phase of in-depth environmental and technical assessments to determine safety and site suitability.”

Approval was neither sought from nor given by any of the communities along the 1,615-mile transportation corridor that would be used to ship the reactor fuel from New Brunswick, Quebec, and Southern Ontario over public roads, for half a century or more.



Activists protest the Deep Geological Repository planned for northwest Ontario. The site is north of Lake Superior, 90 miles from Minnesota’s Voyageurs National Park and 150 miles from the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. Photo: We the Nuclear Free North.

While Laurie Swami, NWMO President and CEO said in the announcement, “This project will solve an environmental issue.” The same press release says that the project has a “175-year timeline.”

The NWMO’s announcement claims, “There is international scientific consensus that a deep geological repository is the safest way to manage used nuclear fuel over the long term.” However, the watchdog group We the Nuclear-Free North (www.wethenuclearfreenorth.ca) reports, “The nuclear industry likes to portray the use of deep geological repositories as an accepted practice, asserting there is an ‘international consensus’ about their use. But that ‘consensus’ reflects agreement among proponents, not the public or independent experts. In fact, there is a list of technical and scientific uncertainties.” (See: <https://nonuclear.se/files/rock-solid-a-scientific-review.pdf>)

— Thanks to Gordon Edwards, President of the Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility, and Brennain Lloyd with Northwatch and We The Nuclear Free North, for reporting.