

America Demands White House Shift To Sane Nuclear Expansion Policy

The nuclear power issue is the key to a new multi-partisan political configuration developing in the United States which is capable of checking the country's current drift toward fascist economic policies and thermo-nuclear war with the Soviet Union.

ENERGY

Pronuclear forces have gone on the offensive in what is shaping up as the most significant 1978 gubernatorial election race in the U.S., the reelection fight of the California Democratic Party's zero-growth "zen governor" Jerry Brown. A series of articles by *New York Times* columnist Tom Wicker last week reported nuclear power expansion as the number one campaign issue which all four Republicans competing for their party's nomination are using against Brown, with notable effect. Last week, after strong testimony by building trades officials and the U.S. Labor Party, the overwhelmingly Democratic Los Angeles city council voted 11-2 to back construction of the Sundersert nuclear plant in southern California, which Brown's handpicked state energy commission has consistently sought to sabotage.

In Congress, Rep. Walter Flowers, chairman of the House Science and Technology's subcommittee on nuclear and fossil fuel development, warned the President that Congress was "hawkish on resources development" and was prepared to confront the Administration head-on to assure development of the Clinch River fast breeder reactor, which the Administration has sought unsuccessfully to kill for nearly one year.

The potential for reversing the drift toward no-growth fascism within the Carter Administration itself was underlined by elements of U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance's speech before the National Conference of Governors Feb. 27. Although not departing from the Administration's formal (and thoroughly inadequate) position on international trade policy, Vance's remarks, undoubtedly cleared with Special Trade Negotiator Robert Strauss, stressed the traditional American orientation to global peace and expanding economic development. "We cannot close our eyes to the relationship between economic growth and political stability,"

the Secretary said, stressing that expansion of U.S. exports, via the Export-Import Bank and concomitant modernization of U.S. industry, is vital.

The nuclear development issue is the precise point at which to apply pressure to Vance, Strauss and similar relatively sane forces in the Administration resisting the deindustrialization and confrontation schemes of the "London faction" around Energy Secretary Schlesinger, Treasury Secretary Blumenthal, and National Security Advisor Brzezinski. This pressure was being applied in heavy doses by both Republicans and Democrats last week:

*The National Conference of Governors, issuing a special statement aimed at the White House, directed President Carter to put promotion of nuclear energy at the top of his energy agenda.

*The Senate Energy Committee, hearing testimony on the fiscal 1979 energy budget by James Schlesinger, raked him over the coals. Republicans Clifford Hansen (Wyo.) and Jim McClure (Id.) attacked the Schlesinger "conservation" policy as responsible for the fall of the dollar; Democrats including Bennett Johnston (D-La.) stressed the importance of moving ahead with nuclear power.

*The House Science and Technology committee's nuclear subcommittee has rewritten the 1979 nuclear budget submitted by Schlesinger to sharply increase funding for fission and fusion development, including \$159 million for the Clinch River liquid metal fast breeder reactor. President Carter himself was forced to sign an \$80 million appropriation for Clinch River when it passed as part of a supplemental appropriations bill last month, although the Administration is still expected to try to block the funds' use.

*Dr. Chauncey Starr, President of the U.S. Electric Power Research Institute, and Dr. Walter Marshall, Deputy Chairman of the United Kingdom's Atomic Energy Commission, announced the development of a "proliferation-proof" breeder cycle at a joint press conference in Washington, D.C., thus torpedoing a major objection of the Administration to breeder development.

*Nationally syndicated columnist Joseph Kraft used the coal strike's exacerbation of the energy crisis to motivate a Presidential policy shift: "The President would be well advised now to seize the opportunity for proclaiming this country's full entry into the nuclear age."

Senate Hits Schlesinger On Energy

Sen. Hanson (R-Wyo.) — There has been a drastic drop of the dollar. The only thing that will make sense to our allies is a policy of assuring the best use of the assets we have. That is the assurance that there will be more domestic production of energy. That is the only program worth being called a program. We have to assure the Germans and Japanese that we have to turn our policy, that the outflow of dollars will be turned around. We must put Americans to work producing energy. That is what the rest of the world is calling for. The Germans and Japanese know this is the only answer for the long term.

The energy budget is a national disgrace. Phase I of the energy plan is nonsense. The Administration has taken no leadership in energy policy.

Sen. McClure (R-Id.) — What I don't understand from the Administration is that there is no sense of urgency. There is an assault on the dollar. There is a decline in our economic strength. Anyone who says you can have an energy growth rate below 2 percent and still think we can have a growing economy and create new jobs is being preposterous and dangerous.

Sen. Johnston (D-La.) — Isn't it true that nuclear energy is cheaper, 30 percent cheaper than coal? When are we as a nation going to make a national decision on nuclear energy? We have deemphasized nuclear energy. The manufacturers are getting out of the business. There are no new plants on line. The Administration thinks that nuclear is not necessary. Isn't it time we made a decision on this?

Tom Wicker: Nuking Jerry Brown

Tom Wicker describing antinuclear Jerry Brown's re-election problems in California, in excerpts from a New York Times column of March 3:

LOS ANGELES — Without much fanfare outside California, Gov. Edmund D. "Jerry" Brown, has become the first national political figure to take the negative, openly and assertively, in the escalating national debate on nuclear power.

In Washington for a national governors' conference, Mr. Brown (said) he intended... to enforce a law he had signed in 1976. It would prevent new nuclear plants from being licensed until the California Energy Commission found that a proven technology for the disposal of radioactive wastes had been demonstrated. Since his Energy Commission takes the view that no such technology is now available, Mr. Brown's intent to enforce the law means that no new nuclear plants may be licensed in California at this time.

But the nuclear scientist Edward Teller recently told Californians the question of safe disposal of nuclear wastes was a "phony and dishonest issue." The gubernatorial candidate for whom he spoke, Attorney General Evelle Younger, and all four other Republican can-

didates for Jerry Brown's job, have begun to focus their fire on the Governor's nuclear power position.

Mr. Brown is a strong favorite for re-election next November, but the nuclear issue might yet cause him real problems. Immediately at stake is the Sundesert project, a \$3 billion reactor the San Diego Gas and Electric Company wants to build in the Mojave desert, to serve much of heavily populated southern California — where the votes are. The Federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission has given preliminary approval to Sundesert, but the California Energy Commission has refused so far to license it...

Mayor Pete Wilson of San Diego — a city that would be served by Sundesert — is another leading candidate in the Republican gubernatorial primary on June 6. He has accused Governor Brown of doing a "serious disservice to the people of the state" in following an antinuclear policy that Mr. Wilson said would bring "massive joblessness and blackouts to California in the 1980s."...

While environmentalists may applaud Governor Brown's stand against nuclear power, not all will approve the use of coal instead; and there's no real doubt that California's increasing population — projected to reach 29 million by the end of the century — will demand new energy sources as well as conservation....

So the Republican candidates are zeroing in on the issue. "Nuclear energy is the future of California," says Edward Davis, the former Los Angeles police chief. He believes the state needs 15 more nuclear plants by the end of the century but describes Jerry Brown as "anti-jobs, anti-energy — we're going to have to call him 'Anti Brown.'"

To Evelle Younger, Mr. Brown has shown himself to be "a confirmed no growther...and that's what the battle is all about: growth or no growth." Whether the facile young Governor prevents the issue from being debated in such disadvantageous terms — for him — will have much to do with this year's race in California as well as the future of the antinuclear movement.

Joseph Kraft:

Tilting Toward The Nuclear Option

Joseph Kraft, describing the significance of a new technology that permits nuclear proliferation without weapons proliferation, in a Feb. 28 column:

Coal is almost dead. Long live nuclear — and safely. That is the underlying meaning of the marathon coal strike for the country's energy problems. So it is good news that there is being announced this week a new technique that divorces all-out nuclear production from proliferation of nuclear weapons.

For several years now coal has been at the center of the country's energy strategy....

But the strike demonstrates that the extensive practice of underground coal mining is not truly consistent with the sensibilities of an advanced industrial...society. The work is dangerous, dirty and hard. Those who undertake it demand privileges that go beyond the usual reward of high wages....

Theoretically the problems of eastern coal could have been solved by western coal. For the seams in the Rocky Mountains lie close to the surface and do not require underground mining.

...But new rules require that 90 percent of the sulfur content be removed from coal before the waste is emitted. That discriminates against western coal, which is so low in sulfur content that it would not ordinarily need any special treatment. As a result western coal will not be competitive east of the Mississippi....

Nuclear power, by contrast, is free from all these social constraints. It is cleaner, cheaper, safer and more reliable than coal. The most progressive power producers in the country have long since gone over to nuclear reactors. A notable example is the TVA, which — having led in hydroelectric power during the 1930s and coal-fired plants in the 1950s — is now going nuclear in a big way.

Association with nuclear weapons, to be sure, has generated a good deal of public apprehension about nuclear power. Though polls and referendums show an overwhelming part of the population favorable to nuclear power, many citizens and political leaders of unquestionably high motivation oppose — and successfully oppose — locating nuclear power plants in major population centers.

But that problem can be met by placing the plants on government reservations or in nuclear parks. Thus the Hanford Nuclear Reservation in central Washington is being used for building three reactors that will provide power to the populous areas around Seattle and Portland. California could also have a piece of that action if Gov. Jerry Brown would be sensible about his state's overwhelming energy difficulties.

A second worry is disposal of nuclear wastes....

The problem becomes much smaller if this country begins moving toward reprocessing plants and breeder reactors that use spent fuel to generate more nuclear fuel. President Carter had turned away from that path because reprocessing generates weapons-grade material and thus might promote proliferation of nuclear bombs...

Scientists in Britain and this country have developed, and are announcing this week, means for going through the whole reprocessing cycle without producing weapons-grade material.

That development is a special boon for President Carter, whose past emphasis on nonproliferation was going nowhere. The president would be well advised now to seize the opportunity for proclaiming this country's full entry into the nuclear age.

Congress 'Hawkish' On Resource Development

Rep. Walter Flowers, (D-Ala) chairman of the Fossil and Nuclear Energy Research Subcommittee of the House Science and Technology Committee, motivating sharply increased funding for nuclear fission and fusion development above the levels budgeted by James Schlesinger's Department of Energy:

"I think the Clinch River breeder reactor is a battleground, a symbol between a Congress that feels very

strongly that this country ought to have a growth policy and is hawkish on resource development and an Administration that is at least perceived by many people to be contrary to that. I have stressed this in my discussions with high officials in the Administration and until there is a rational alternative Congress is going to proceed with Clinch River."

TVA Chairman Demands Nuclear Timetable

TVA Chairman Aubrey Wagner addressed the Feb. 25 Public Awareness Symposium of the WATtec conference in Knoxville, Tennessee:

The current coal strike has again underscored the delicate and vulnerable nature of the nation's energy pipeline and may provide a "very small sample" of what a permanent energy collapse would do, TVA Chairman Aubrey J. Wagner said today.

Even after coal supply returns to normal, Wagner said, meeting increasing demands for energy will pose formidable challenges for the TVA region and the nation through the rest of this decade and into the 1980s.

He said there is a "strong possibility" that these needs will not be met unless an inexhaustible basic energy source with acceptable economic and environmental costs can be developed....

"Those responsible for providing the nation's power needs will agree unanimously that the only available technologies for new large-scale generating stations are fossil-burning steam plants or light water nuclear reactors," Wagner said. "This will certainly be true for the 1980s and probably for the balance of this century."

Wagner cited the growth in regulatory requirements for nuclear power plants and called for creation of a regulatory climate in which utilities "can set a reasonable schedule for construction and stick to it."

He said a nuclear reactor project today requires about 3.5 million engineering man-hours, compared to about 500,000 man-hours in the 1960s, and that engineering drawings for nuclear plants which once covered 2,200 pages now fill 45,000 pages.

"Some of this is expected in a developing technology, and we absolutely must make nuclear plants as safe as humanly possible," Wagner said. "But we also need to place greater emphasis on standardized designs and somehow freeze the design so it isn't changed again and again after construction has started."

He cited TVA's experience with its Sequoyah Nuclear Plant near Chattanooga which has been delayed for five years because of design changes and regulatory delays. The unavailability of this plant has contributed to TVA's problems in meeting power demands this winter, Wagner said.

He also reiterated his support for a "vigorous" breeder reactor research and development program.

"We should be working now through projects like the Clinch River project to have the breeder available as a commercial option by the end of this century," Wagner said. "Construction of the Clinch River project does not commit us to widespread use of breeders or to the plutonium age. It simply moves us a necessary step closer to making the breeder a commercial reality — to be there if we need it."