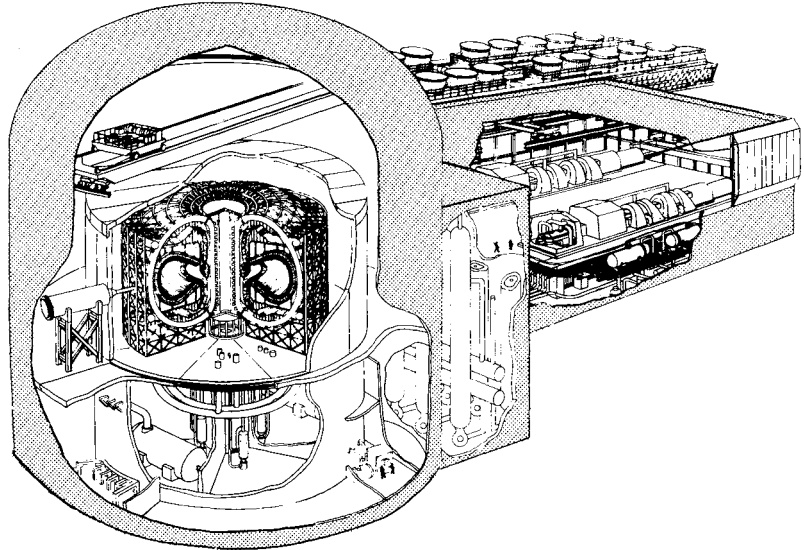


# Fusion bill clears Congress

by Graham Lowry



Early next week, President Carter will have a bill on his desk that commits the United States to demonstrating the commercial feasibility of controlled thermonuclear fusion power by the year 2000. Final congressional approval of the bill today opens the door for the development of unlimited, cheap and clean energy.

The legislation, initiated by Cong. Mike McCormack (D-Wash.), is entitled the Fusion Energy Research, Development, and Demonstration Act of 1980.

For fiscal years 1982 and 1983, the bill orders an additional \$100 million each year to the nation's fusion program and mandates reaching commercial fusion by "the turn of the 21st century."

The increased funding, which will reach approximately \$500 million in 1982, will allow serious engineering and design to begin on constructing an experimental reactor in the early 1980s.

By voice vote on its consent calendar on Sept. 23, the Senate passed a combined House-Senate version of bills filed by Congressman McCormack and Sen. Paul Tsongas (D-Mass.). Senate amendments had already brought the Tsongas bill into line with McCormack's, and the House voted final approval the day after McCormack announced his acceptance of the amended Senate version of the bill.

Scientists around the country were jubilant over the bill's passage, which many believe provides an effective mandate for unleashing an enormous set of potentials in the most advanced technologies on the horizon.

"This is a great day for America," declared Dr.

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*An early-1970s blueprint for a nuclear fusion power plant.*

Source: U.S. Department of Energy

Morris Levitt of the Fusion Energy Foundation in New York. "By recognizing the near-term potential for the unlimited benefits of fusion to become available, the Congress has provided us with the best possible alternative to the austerity policies and synthetic fuel boondoggles which up to now have been held out as our economic future," said Dr. Levitt, the FEF's Executive Director.

## Tarapur fuel sale approved

Congressman McCormack hailed the Senate passage of his bill as "a tremendous victory," and added, "We've had several this week, including Senate approval for shipping nuclear fuel to India for its Tarapur nuclear plant." The 48-46 vote on India Sept. 24 clears the way for the United States to fulfill its treaty agreement to supply fuel for the U.S.-built plant.

At the Fusion Energy Foundation's headquarters in New York, Dr. Levitt also praised "our nation's scientists and engineers, who have proven they can meet the challenge and get the job done when they're given support and adequate resources. With what the McCormack bill provides, we now have the basis to rebuild our industries, our educational system, and a rational military policy."

Dr. Levitt, in addition to citing the impact of the FEF's campaign for fusion since its founding in 1974, paid tribute to "the excellent leadership" of the government's fusion program since the early 1970s. With the passage of the McCormack fusion bill, a program previously restricted to large-scale scientific experiments "now moves ahead with an engineering commitment to produce fusion energy at commercial prices by the turn of the century," Levitt declared. ■