

## Congressional Closeup by Ronald Kokinda and Susan Kokinda

### Simpson blasts local veto on nuclear plants

Senator Alan Simpson (R-Wyo.), chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Subcommittee on Nuclear Regulation, has expressed alarm at the way Public Law 96-295 (mandating state and local involvement in emergency evacuation plans for nuclear power plants) is being used to shut down two nuclear plants at Indian Point, New York.

Simpson announced in the *Congressional Record* May 12 that the subject of emergency preparedness at nuclear power plants "will be the subject of careful scrutiny by myself and others" in his subcommittee.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission set June 9 as the deadline to alter evacuation plans in case of nuclear accident at Indian Point. The NRC has said it will shut down the plants if that is not done. One of the affected communities has refused to cooperate, preventing the formulation of the plans and posing the prospect that the Indian Point reactors will be closed.

"It was certainly not this senator's intent," Simpson said in response to the threatened shutdown, "nor do I think it was the intent of the other senators and congressmen involved in the drafting of Public Law 96-295, to confer upon state or local governments what amounts to a de facto authority to veto the operation of nuclear power plants. If that is in reality where we are with emergency planning as we know it today, then as the *New York Times* so forcefully states, 'The devolution of power over nuclear power from the federal to local level has gone too far.'"

Simpson added that he "certainly expected that state and local governments would be called upon to assist in the preparation and implementation of emergency plans, and, in most in-

stances, that cooperation has been forthcoming."

Simpson said he intends to look at the possibilities for rewriting the law.

### Ruckelshaus ducks the DDT issue

By a vote of 97 to 0, the U.S. Senate has confirmed William Ruckelshaus as the new administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, despite serious questions aired at his confirmation hearings. A variety of witnesses had raised the issue of Ruckelshaus's role in banning DDT during his previous tenure at EPA.

Not a single senator appeared concerned about a policy decision which has caused a resurgence of malaria in the developing sector and the deaths of hundreds of millions of people from that disease.

Witnesses from the National Democratic Policy Committee and other organizations had detailed in the confirmation hearing the arbitrary process by which Ruckelshaus had banned DDT in the early 1970s, despite an extensive EPA examination which concluded that DDT should *not* be banned.

In the floor discussions, Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Chairman Robert Stafford (R-Vt.) claimed that every word Ruckelshaus had ever written and every position he had ever taken had been carefully scrutinized. Yet, when Ruckelshaus was questioned about the DDT decision, he answered merely that the ban was only a ban on domestic use, and therefore he was not responsible for the international consequences which followed when other countries, frightened by the U.S. decision, ceased to use DDT.

In the limited floor debate on Ruckelshaus, "Kissinger Republi-

cans" spoke in favor of the Ruckelshaus nomination, touting him as the man who could "clean up the EPA."

Ruckelshaus's ardent supporters included Stafford, John Chaffee (R-R.I.), Howard Baker (R-Tenn.), Slade Gorton (R-Wash.), and Richard Lugar (R-Ind.).

### Melcher leads round one against IMF in Senate

Senator John Melcher (D-Mont.) offered an amendment to the budget resolution which advocates cutting the amount of the U.S. IMF quota increase from \$8.5 billion to \$3.4 billion, thus holding the increase at 20 per cent. The resolution was defeated by a vote of 76 to 19, with a core of conservative Republicans and anti-Volcker Democrats who were supporting Melcher in this initial foray.

Melcher argued that the quota increase was a bailout of the major U.S. banks whose bad loans would be made good at U.S. taxpayers' expense. When Sen. Charles Mathias (R-Md.) said that giving the money to the IMF was necessary to the maintenance of U.S. exports to the Third World, Melcher replied, "That hardly seems relevant to the discussion, since the countries getting International Monetary Fund monies will have to reduce their imports. Mexico will be required under IMF requirements to reduce its imports from us."

IMF supporters Mathias and Banking Committee Chairman Jake Garn (R-Utah) seemed extraordinarily defensive, indicating enormous anti-IMF constituency pressure.

The vote on the IMF legislation is likely to occur before the Williamsburg economic summit at the end of May. Senator Garn has not yet released the Banking Committee's report on the IMF. Thus senators may

not have a chance to study the report, with its wide-ranging regulatory changes, until shortly before the vote.

## **H**ouse expands civilian R&D authorization

The House of Representatives passed the Department of Energy Civilian Research and Development Authorization Act for FY1984 on May 12 by a vote of 230 to 132. The bill is roughly a half-billion dollars more than administration requests and roughly 10 percent larger than the FY1983 authorization.

The bill includes \$500 million for the magnetic fusion program, an increase of \$33 million over the administration request, but only a 7 percent increase above last year.

Rep. Marilyn Lloyd (D-Tenn.) stated that the magnetic fusion funding "amounts to a barely discernible real growth" in the program compared to last year.

However, she noted that the additional \$33 million "would support mainline projects with related university work, accelerate technology development for plasma heating, and encourage planning and design for the next Tokamak device both at the Oak Ridge Fusion Engineering Design Center and the Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory."

The bill also adds \$5 million for the fusion material irradiation test (FMIT) at Hanford, Washington, and provides \$3.5 million for research on compact, high-density systems and \$5.5 million for the Mainline Mirror Machine at Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, which has support work being done at MIT.

The bill adds \$40 million for the high temperature gas reactor, an additional \$9.5 million for the light water reactor safety program, \$20 million

for electric energy systems and energy storage systems, and \$13.5 million for R&D on fuel reprocessing for breeder and high temperature gas-cooled reactors.

In supporting both the advanced gas centrifuge and atomic vapor laser isotope separation (AVLIS) for uranium enrichment, the bill adds \$11 million to accelerate development of centrifuge machines to increase the power efficiency for the Gas Centrifuge Enrichment Program at Portsmouth, Ohio.

The bill adds funding for energy-intensive fossil fuels processes, such as magnetohydrodynamics, but also supports solar, other energy-diffuse systems, and "conservation."

## **C**linch River funding still in trouble

In its May 12 authorizations for FY1984, the House left no money to be spent for the Clinch River Breeder Reactor until specific funding is approved on another bill. This provision, voted on as a separate amendment, will supposedly give the Congress and the administration time to integrate private-sector money into the CRBR project.

The amendment passed 388 to 1; if a plan giving the private sector great financial liability and investment is not put together, funding for Clinch River will cease at the end of FY 83.

## **H**ouse committee targets defense laser programs

The House Armed Services Committee voted the third week in May to eliminate the laser weapon programs of the military services that are the basis for the first phase chemical laser antiballistic missile (ABM) system

proposed by the Fusion Energy Foundation and others. Along with the severe cuts in the military service programs, the committee voted increases in the research and engineering budgets of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) in the areas of advanced laser and particle-beam development.

The move appears to be a Democratic Party leadership attempt to box the President's beam-weapon program into a "research and development" bargaining chip for arms control negotiations.

The committee voted to eliminate the U.S. Navy SeaLite laser weapons program and the U.S. Air Force space-based laser program, and to cut the U.S. Army program 39 percent and the U.S. Air Force Airborne Laser Laboratory program 61 percent. At the same time, the committee cut the U.S. Army program in anti-missile missiles 56 percent.

The Navy program has developed the most powerful, continuously operating laser in the U.S., the mid-infrared chemical laser (MIRACL). This laser once upgraded can be installed on mountain tops and direct its beam towards orbiting mirrors for focusing on ballistic missile targets. It is also the present basis for development of laser isotope separation, and for defending U.S. Navy aircraft carrier task forces from attack. The U.S. Air Force Airborne Laser Laboratory has in the past demonstrated the ability to acquire and track ballistic missile targets. The U.S. Army program has developed a land-mobile laser weapon system, the Mobile Test Unit, that has attracted considerable interest in Europe for defense against Soviet aircraft and battlefield missiles.

The committee's action must still face the full House, and if approved there, a Senate-House conference committee.