

1. I was Director-General for Energy of the European Commission from 1981-1986, during which period I handled the entire consequences of the Chernobyl accident; the transfer of a big injection of funds to help the British Government of the day build new nuclear power stations; and a big build-up of the European Union's Demonstration Project Programmes on Energy Saving and Renewable Energies [now known as SAVE and Altener respectively]. As regards Altener, wind energy was injected into this programme for the first time under my authority. I remain in touch with many of my former officials, and have access to all EU publications on energy.

2. I will be brief. It is time for the Government to give a very strong lead to the public in favour of nuclear power, instead of ducking for cover every time the subject is mentioned. The arguments in favour are stronger than ever. They have to do with global warming, reliability, safety, energy security and economics. The arguments against are weak. They are largely based on half-truths or lies, which the public authorities - and in too many cases the media - do not have the courage to expose.

3. On global warming, the Government is unlikely to meet even its present modest 2010 target for reduction of CO₂ emissions unless it can ensure that at least the current 25% of our electricity continues to come from nuclear. Still less will it meet the enormously increased reductions which the Government, and all EU countries, agree they will need later. In the EU as a whole, the Commission sees the manner of replacement of 110 GW of nuclear power plants between 2015 and 2030 as crucial to the emissions and energy outlook. In Britain, the problem is far more urgent. A BNFL news release of 25 May 2000 showed that 4 Magnox stations will fall out not later than the year 2006, after which the process of decommissioning will continue inexorably. There is no prospect whatever of renewable energy taking over on this scale. On gas, see below.

4. On reliability, a good nuclear power station today will continuously produce a huge proportion of its rated potential: at the Heysham power stations, for example, the Management is achieving 90% and shooting for 95%.

5. On safety, a lot of nonsense is talked. For years opponents of nuclear used to argue that clusters of leukaemia in Cumbria - my home county - were a result of Sellafield. A series of scientific studies showed this was nonsense. The protesters have shut up. There is also constant media talk of thousands of post-Chernobyl deaths. The UN scientific body concerned -UNSCEAR - has concluded the figure to be 45. Nuclear power stations have been operating in Britain for nearly 50 years, yet no member of the public has died as a result. There is no evidence -whether from Britain or from places like France or Belgium where nuclear supplies 80% or 90% of electricity - that any significant number of people move away from an area when a power station or other nuclear facility is built.

6. On energy security, the oilprice shocks of the 70's and 80's enabled development of North Sea oil and gas on a considerable scale. This is now peaking, and will decline. The European Commission predicts that, on present trends, nearly two-thirds of overall energy requirements will

be imported by 2020, compared with less than half in 1995. We would be back where we were in the early 1970's. If we do not increase nuclear, gas is the most serious alternative. Quite apart from its considerable CO2 emissions, it presents a major energy security risk. As EU production peaks, we should have to turn increasingly to Russia and Iran! There are no such energy security problems for nuclear, due to the ample availability of re-cycled uranium fuel.

7. On economics, the entire system is skewed against nuclear. Alone of all energy sources, it is required by Government policy to reflect full environmental costs, including those relating to decommissioning and clean-up, in its pricing policy. It is also subject to a crazy licensing system, which imposes a two-stage approval for all nuclear projects involving first the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate and then the Environment Agency. At the other extreme, wind energy, besides being subsidised in terms of its sales, is not required to make any contribution to the back-up capacity needed to keep the customer happy during the 70% or more of the time when the wind-turbines are not generating. Despite all these economic disadvantages, nuclear output costs are still only 0.7 p. per electrical unit of output more than gas. What if the playing field were levelled?

8. It is essential to the energy security of this country that the Review urges the Government to lead public opinion back to nuclear, instead of leaving the field open for a comparatively small number of anti-nuclear activists to keep stirring up ill-informed opposition

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