

Emails About "Advantages of Nuclear Power" with My Responses

Excellent essay! I posted a link to your story on a discussion group this morning and received many admiring responses from around the world. (The discussion group centers on emerging digital gold currencies but entertains a wide variety of economic and technological topics.)

Also, *Access to Energy* is going on my bookmarks list.

I enjoyed your column, "Advantages of Nuclear Power." I too support nuclear power, and worked in their design in the late '70's and early '80's.

One quibble: you speak of "Fourth generation fusion reactors" in the works. Is this right?? Last I heard, controlled fusion was still a dream. Breeder reactors, perhaps?

My Response:

I gave a talk on this subject last night to a group of Seattle civic leaders in The Diet. One member, John Ellis, Puget Power CEO who was embroiled in the WPPSS default, made the same point. I should not have said that fusion reactors would be in operation "fairly soon." "In the foreseeable future" would have been more appropriate. According to him, and I assume you will agree, dealing with the heat generated has yet to be fully solved.

The text for this talk, with its 34 (ppt) slides, is, as of today, on my web site (www.donaldmiller.com) if you would like to take a look at it. It is a 30-minute synthesis of my two LRC articles on radiation and nuclear power.

I really liked your article on the advantages of nuclear power. I'm an ex-UW Med School prof (retired) and, just for the hell of it, I recently started a weblog, <http://www.southsoundlibertarian.us>, after moving out of Seattle and down to a log cabin in the Lacey area. Thanks for your writings. Best wishes.

Excellent detailed expose!

Nuclear power will always be a "no-no" here because the technology leads to U239 and that's the stuff U make bombs out of. There goes our power hegemony up in smoke! Why do U think we prattle so much about "non-proliferation". No politician will admit it but that's the way it is. Enjoyed your article and arguments, anyway!

My Response:

India, with a lot smart people, spent 10 years trying to make one and failed on its first test (they go it right the second time). Terrorists, even if they get their hands on enough plutonium, would have a hard time making a bomb with it. (It would be much easier to buy one of the 100 missing suitcase nukes from the Soviet arsenal on the black market.)

Nuclear power, as I argue, is the best way to make terrorists go away. And as for "power hegemony," the U.S. is now in the phase where our country (and its politicians) will increasingly experience the "sorrows of empire." (See the last sentence of my article)

People who are implacably opposed to nuclear power have an ideological bias that blinds them to the true facts of the matter. For them it is a "no-no." It is a political issue. They are against economic growth and for population control--and, as a means to these ends, they are for coercive legislation. As Amory Lovins, founder of the Rocky Mountain Institute, puts it, "If nuclear power were clean and safe... it would still be unattractive because of the political implications of the kind of energy economy it would lock us into."

Keep an open mind, and since you enjoyed the article, think about the arguments made there and check out the links in it, particularly to the books by Beckmann and Cohen. Beckmann explains in more detail why P239 is not a threat, and why, indeed, the best thing, for our health and that of the world, is for it to proliferate (in breeder reactors).

Written by a radiation safety officer:

Bravo once again on a great article on LewRockwell.com. The first one I have circulated widely, since it echoed what principled scientists have been saying for decades (and what I have been trying to tell the workers at the hospital in between trying to deal with the reams of regulatory paperwork). Your second article is equally enlightening, but I'm not sure the fourth-generation nuclear power plants are quite ready for prime time. I believe the prospect of fusion power was what prompted Lewis Strauss' "too cheap to meter" line about electricity production, and he was obviously a few decades premature in his optimism. In fact, the fusion research industry seems to have produced exactly one reliable constant, 20, in that its spokesmen say that reliable fusion power is about 20 years in the future (and they've been saying this for about fifty years now). Fortunately, there are many underutilized current technologies, and I think you touched on them all. Please keep up the good work!

My Response:

Thanks for your nice comments. You are right about fourth-generation nuclear power plants.

I gave a talk on this subject last night to a group of Seattle civic leaders in The Diet. One member, John Ellis, Puget Power CEO who was embroiled in the WPPSS default, made the same point. I should not have said that fusion reactors would be in operation "fairly soon." From an optimistic viewpoint, "In the foreseeable future" would have been more appropriate. According to him, and I assume you will agree, dealing with the heat generated by a fusion reactor has yet to be fully solved.

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The pictures and observations and facts if something goes wrong...when we are no longer in charge is enough for any grandma to say NO NUCLEAR PLANTS. 3 MILE ISLAND CLOSE ENOUGH OF A SHOCK TREATMENT USE OUR BRAINS FOR HARNESSING ENERGY FROM SUN, WIND, AND WATER SO WE CAN PULL THE PLUG IF SOMETHING ISN'T RIGHT... I HOPE YOU TAKE THE TIME TO REVIEW THE PHOTOS AND FACTS HERE/ AND SEE REALITY WITHOUT SCIENTIFIC LENS. JUST THE TAKING THE FAMILY OUT FOR A DAY VIEW...AND NOBODY IN RIGHT MIND CAN SAY IT CAN'T HAPPEN AGAIN... BECAUSE HUMANS MAKE MISTAKES NO MATTER HOW PERFECT THEY THINK THEY ARE... Can you say you'd take your family to live near Chernobyl or for a romp there?? ... Even animals protect their young.... Is it big bucks the God we worship! Frustrated Grandma of 5 here in USA who doesn't want to see photos like these of USA in the future....bad enough terrorists thinking of ways to ruin us..

My Response:

The best form of energy to "pull the plug if something isn't right" is nuclear energy. It is concentrated and thereby more readily brought under control. Automobile accidents kill 50,000 people a year, accidental falls several thousands. Ever wonder why, with all the elevators in the country, you never hear of any deaths in elevator accidents? That is because, like with nuclear power, its safety mechanism is not activated when something goes wrong--it is kept inoperative only if everything is right. If the cable holding the elevator goes slack, the jaws of the elevator immediately clamp onto the guardrail in its normal position. Similarly, the fuel rods in a nuclear power plant are held up in their vertical position by electromagnets. If the electrical power goes out, the rods fall back down into their shell and the fission reactions stops.

I have seen the web site you mention. Evacuating Chernobyl and its surroundings was entirely unnecessary. Had the populace been allowed to remain, like those people in those apartment buildings (that I write about in my LewRockwell article "Afraid of Radiation? Low doses are good for you"), the radiation there would have protected them from getting cancer! The left-behind teddy bear in the rubble of an apartment there makes for a touching photo. The child who had it would have arguably been healthier had she stayed there with her teddy bear.

Hitler's Joseph Goebbels, who knew well the power of propaganda, said, "The truth is that which most people believe and people believe that which they hear most often." Americans hear repeatedly that any amount of radiation is dangerous. It is not true.

Nuclear energy is not "instant gratification." It is the means by which your grandchildren will be able to live a long life, by having the energy needed to maintain life-long good health.

Very interesting article. Often it's incredibly hard to know whom we should believe, isn't it? Each side of the argument has its "irrefutable evidence" and convincing arguments -- and hardly any of us have the time, energy, resolve, and even expertise, to research which ones of those claims are valid, and which ones are not....

My response:

Hitler's Joseph Goebbels, who knew well the power of propaganda, said, "The truth is that which most people believe and people believe that which they hear most often." To distinguish reality from fantasy and truth from propaganda requires unbiased, actual measurements--and the time and energy to study them.

World oil will be completely gone by 2050. Cheap oil will be gone by 2015-2030 (based on just about every experts calculation of peak oil). There is not enough time. The cost of one nuclear plant is \$1 billion+. Even if we harness fusion, the cost of one of those will be several times a fission plant. In addition, as oil depletes the cost of powering machinery to harvest uranium from the earth will go up just as everything else. I'm afraid in the long run technological fixes will become LESS of a priority, the world will worry about simple things like getting food and staying warm. In the second half of the 21st Century, I envision electricity only powering communications and light bulbs, that's about it...

My Response:

I am familiar with peak oil. I subscribe to Tom Rupperts's From the Wilderness, and he is very much on top of this subject.

Given the alternatives, we need to start building those 4000 nuclear power plants as soon as possible, if not for our, then our grandchildren's sake.

Your article on LRC is an extremely helpful primer on energy, war, and policy. For 20 years I worked for Southern Company, an Atlanta-based holding company for five southeastern electric utilities. I remember the political problems involved in constructing Georgia Power's Plant Vogtle, Southern's largest nuclear plant, located near Augusta, GA. I know much has been learned since Vogtle's construction (early '80s), but most of it is not being disseminated to the general public. I intend to pass your article on to as many people as I can and post a link to it on blogs. You've done a great service in writing this article. Thank you.

When you convince the eco-fascists, their sock puppet politicians and the brainwashed sheep that nuclear power is safe and good for the environment, wake me up.

Might I suggest buying CBS and the Marxist New York Times to begin your crusade in deprogramming the American public. It should only take....oh, maybe 10 years of favorable reporting on nuclear power to change some attitudes.

Face it, Mr. Miller, the only way to get nuclear power into the energy equation is for America to peaceably divorce. Give the fascists and communists their own country in California and the Northeast, and let Americans live on the remainder of the land. Barring that, history and the present day attitudes and demeanor of Americans shows that we're heading for a second civil war.

Best article I've ever read on the subject. The only thing I'd recommend to improve it would be a breakdown (or a handwave) on how much oil is needed for energy other than what nuclear would produce. Oh, but you covered that in the part about the new oil from waste processes didn't you. Yep. The best article on the subject I've ever read :).
