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Nuclear Power Crisis

There is a nuclear power crisis in America today. But the crisis is not what you might think: it is not a crisis of the nuclear power industry. The crisis is here, at this convention. This crisis is caused by the fact that powerful forces within the Libertarian Party and the libertarian movement are prepared to scuttle libertarian, free-market principles in the field of nuclear energy. The nuclear power industry, we can all readily agree, is now totally regulated, subsidized, controlled, and hobbled by the federal government and its Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Its insurance liabilities for any possible accidents are arbitrarily limited and partially underwritten by the federal government itself, through the Price-Anderson Act. The obvious libertarian solution, already enshrined in the current national Libertarian platform in a plank that sailed through in 1977 without opposition, is to privatize the nuclear power industry. The nuclear power industry, like all other industries, should be deregulated, decontrolled, denationalized. It should be set free to meet the test of the free market. Period. But now, suddenly, the **Libertarian Review**—Students for a Libertarian Society (LR-SLS) forces, all headquartered at 1620 Montgomery Street, San Francisco, have suddenly come up with an ominously changed perspective: what they want to do is to Shut Down the Nuclear Power Industry.

Why are the LR-SLS clique suddenly no longer content with the clear-cut libertarian, free market position on nuclear energy? For, as we demonstrate below (pp.3-5), the leaders in this new turn not so long ago were taking the proper libertarian position on this issue. Milton Mueller, head of SLS and an architect of this new strategy, took an excellent position less than two years ago in the **Illinois Libertarian**. Roy Childs, editor of LR and the other principal designer of the anti-nuclear turn, took a typically perfervid and hopped-up stand five years ago that even went beyond nuclear neutrality to a neo-conservative position. Note the characteristic Childsian rhetoric. The popularly written pro-nuclear, anti-environmentalist book, **The Disaster Lobby**, became for Childs “the single most important book on current affairs that I have read within the last two years” (in January 1974). Childs attacked the “hysterical campaign” by the “press and left-wing intellectuals” against DDT and “other life-saving pesticides.” Childs warned that “the people who once littered the streets on ‘earth day’” had invaded government, “attempting to seize control of business and technology and to shackle our economic system with controls destined to arrest progress.” “Lies about air and water pollu-

tion were spread,” said the Childs of 1974, including “distortions of facts used to stop industries from producing more oil—or to develop nuclear power...” (Emphasis added.) Childs concluded his panegyric with this rather inflated estimate: **The Disaster Lobby** “is a journalistic masterpiece. . . . It deserves a vast audience; it desperately needs readers and defenders.” And finally: “I cannot be more blunt, or more enthusiastic: **The Disaster Lobby** is a classic, a heroic achievement, magnificent on every level.”

One of the passages in **The Disaster Lobby**, this book “magnificent on every level,” is a blistering attack on Dr. John Gofman (see p. 5 below), one of the very few nuclear scientists critical of the alleged health hazards of nuclear power. Gofman is the person now touted and hailed as the last word on the subject by Childs and Mueller.

Why this sudden turn against libertarian principle? The answer is all too clear. It is because, in seeking allies and recruits from leftists and liberals on college campuses, SLS has found that a free market position, a stance neither for nor against nuclear power, is not a “politically potent” position, as one SLS leader admitted. Yes, it is often not politically sexy to be in favor of freedom, instead of subsidizing something on the one hand or prohibiting it on the other. But freedom is what we are all about. And sometimes, if explained well enough, it can become politically powerful. In his **Illinois Libertarian** article, published before Mueller helped found SLS, he writes wisely: “There is little to be gained from cooperating with the

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Late Bulletin: SLS Makes Threats!

Just as we go to press, we have been informed that Milton Mueller, head of SLS, has threatened platform committee member Bill Evers with using his SLS minions to defeat Evers for the national committee, if Evers should dare to oppose the SLS plank on nuclear power. Now we know what the LR-SLS clique and their mentors think about honest and open debate within the Libertarian Party. They are willing to use threats to suppress any dissent from their political line. When you vote this weekend, remember this threat. Vote FOR Unity through Honest and Open Debate. Vote AGAINST bureaucratic maneuvers to suppress debate. Vote AGAINST the old machine politics!

Nuclear Power Crisis

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left in their anti-nuclear crusade. They are against nuclear power per se, not government promotion of it. . . . We must establish a libertarian alternative in the political debate." Why then has Mueller abandoned that alternative? Furthermore, he writes that: "The Libertarian Party's Stand on Nuclear Power is a Crucial Litmus Test of its Members' Understanding of the Revolutionary Nature of Free-Market Economics." Yes, indeed, it is! But now Mueller flunks his own test. Has he forgotten so soon? At any rate, it is clear that SLS and its spiritual mentors at LR have decided to fuzz over and dilute libertarian principle in order to follow after left-liberals on campus. To which we can only say, Shame!

One disturbing tendency of the LR-SLS group, in declaiming on this subject, is to shift back and forth wildly between two arguments for their anti-nuclear power stance, and then, when finally clobbered on both arguments, to regroup and retreat to yet a third. This reminds one uncomfortably of the standard behavior of left-liberal intellectuals when specific charges against the free-market are patiently rebutted. As the great economist Joseph Schumpeter brilliantly put it: "... capitalism stands its trial before judges who have the sentence of death in their pockets. They are going to pass it, whatever the defense they may hear; the only success victorious defense can possibly produce is a change in the indictment."

The first two arguments of the LR-SLS in their campaign to shut down the nuclear industry are (1) that the industry was created by and wrapped up in government, and (2) that nuclear power presents a high degree of risk to the public. Both arguments, however, prove far too much. On the first, many goods and services have been created by and wrapped up in government. Should our policy then be to Shut Them Down, or to privatize them? For example, should we shut down all electricity plants because the electric utility industry has been subsidized, controlled, and regulated by government — or should we deregulate and privatize the industry? Better yet, streets and roads have been created by government for centuries. Should we privatize these roads, or campaign on a platform of Shutting Them Down? **There's** a real winner. But if the object is to fawn on left-liberal youth, then maybe the LR-SLS group's proposal to shut down nuclear power plants is a winner. But is the policy libertarian?

The other view — to outlaw risky activities — has chilling and devastating implications. For nuclear scientists and engineers have demonstrated that nuclear power plants are far less risky than: dams, tall buildings, airplanes, automobiles, or, for that matter, knives and guns. Are we supposed to outlaw all of these industries and activities in a mad quest for the prohibition of all risk in the world, for being coddled in a government-made cocoon from cradle to grave? Whatever happened to the Roy Childs of 1975 who fearlessly proclaimed that risk was "an essential part of the human condition"? Well, he has now repudiated those remarks in order to clamber on the anti-nuclear bandwagon. Again, for shame! Now a risk-free society is the goal pushed in several articles and advertise-

ments in the infamous July-August energy issue of *Libertarian Review*.

After being pummelled and defeated on these two issues, the LR-SLS clique regrouped, and came up with yet a third, and very different approach: pollution. They alleged that nuclear radiation pollutes the air and commits, in the phrase of the SLS platform plank (see p. 6) "random murder," a phrase that deliberately confuses accidents with murder. But nuclear scientists, medical physicists, and engineers have repeatedly shown that low-level radiation from nuclear power plants is so negligible that it cannot be distinguished from natural "background" radiation from rocks, soil, and outer space, including cosmic rays. Furthermore, there is no proof whatsoever that any of this low-level radiation is at all harmful, much less committing "random murder."

We must realize this: that the amount of radiation a person absorbs from a single plane flight from New York to Los Angeles is 1700 times the radiation he or she receives **every year** from all the nuclear power plants in the United States. And the amount he absorbs from his color TV set every year is about 340 times the amount he gets from nuclear plants. Moreover, the radiation emitted per year from the granite in Grand Central Station is more than the Nuclear Regulatory Commission permits to nuclear reactors! And yet, as all too often in our movement, it is very difficult to use **reductio ad absurdum**, because so many people embrace the absurd. For the reaction of one member of the SLS clique was that therefore Grand Central Station should be pulled down!

And are we also to compel the total evacuation of Denver, Colorado because every resident, because of the city's altitude, absorbs 20 times more radiation every year than the NRC permits at the boundary of a nuclear plant? Are we going to join the notorious Pol Pot in forcing everyone out of disapproved-of cities?

The central libertarian point on pollution is as follows: Nothing may be prohibited by arbitrary statute or decree. To prove that one person has harmfully polluted the air of another, the victim or victims must go into court, like all alleged victims of invasion of person or property, and prove invasion of rights **beyond a reasonable doubt**. Not only have the anti-nuclear forces, including LR-SLS, failed to meet this test of proof, but the preponderance of evidence is very much the other way.

The current LP national platform in the planks covering energy, pollution, and utilities, as very slightly amended in a proposal by Bill Evers and myself, is published below (see p. 6). Next to it, is the SLS proposed plank on energy, with its trendy emphasis on a decentralized, "soft" energy path. You will note that the current platform is eminently libertarian in all of its parts, and indeed it sailed through the 1977 convention without a dissenting voice — but that, of course, was before powerful forces within our party decided to abandon principle in order to cozy up to left-liberals on campus.

In the first place, the SLS plank is poorly drawn, cutting across and duplicating as it does two other existing separate

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Nuclear Power: Beyond 'For' or 'Against'

By the earlier Milton Mueller

Nuclear power, I believe, is going to be the new "Vietnam War": an issue with far-reaching ideological and economic implications around which a major political movement and countermovement will be generated. Opposition to nuclear power may be the central focus on which the Left will galvanize their opposition to the American economic system. Just as the war *could* have been the ideal issue with which to turn this country away from foreign interventionism, so nuclear power *could* be the ideal issue with which to reveal the follies of economic interventionism. Tragically, however, the Left is exclusively concerned about the "corporate" side of the corporate state, and the Right is so busy apologizing for business interests that they can scarcely be counted on to consistently fight government involvement in the nuclear industry.

Are you **for** or **against** nuclear power? This is the question preoccupying the media, the opinion-makers and, as we shall see, some libertarians. But this is the **wrong question**, and no libertarian position can be arrived at as long as it serves as the basis of discussion. The real issue is: can any industry develop safely and economically with massive government subsidies and intervention? Of course, the answer is no.

The nuclear power industry serves as an ugly reminder that America is neither "going capitalist" nor "going socialist"; the real America is a corporate state, with massive doses of government and business "partnership" in key areas of the economy. Everyone knows that nuclear technology sprang from the war machine of the federal government after World War II, but fewer know the full extent of government involvement in the "peaceful" uses of nuclear power since then. Here are some of the most significant elements of the government/business alliance in the nuclear industry:

- For years, the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) has been set up with the express purpose of subsidizing and promoting the use of nuclear power, with taxpayers' money. Indeed, government regulation of the industry is sharply distinguished from regulation of other energy industries in that government promotion has more to do with the existence of nuclear power than commercial demand or economic feasibility.

- In 1957, and again in 1965 and 1975, Congress passed the Price-Anderson Act, which limits the liability of power companies for a nuclear accident up to \$560 million. Of this \$560 million, the power companies would pay only \$127 million, while taxpayers would be forced to make up the difference. And if damages exceed \$560 million in any nuclear accident in the future, it's tough luck for the victims. This moral obscenity was rationalized by industry lobbyists on the grounds that without it, insurance costs would make building nuclear power plants prohibitively expensive.

- Recently, the Feds have decided to subsidize another aspect of the industry: nuclear waste disposal. Nuclear wastes have become a serious burden on many nuclear power plants, since thousands of tons are stored at the reactor sites. Unless new disposal or storage facilities are found, "as many as 23 nuclear power plants may have to begin closing by 1979" (Richard Pollock, director of Critical Mass). Thus, Jimmy Carter announced October 18, 1977 that the Federal government will accept and take title to all spent nuclear fuel and store it in government-owned storage sites, for a ridiculously low price that in no way reflects the true costs of the service. The government has therefore relieved the nuclear power industry of the risk and much of the cost of waste management.

The cases of government subsidization of the nuclear industry provide classic examples of how uneconomical businesses use government to relieve themselves of the true cost of doing business. Added together, they amount to literally billions of dollars worth of subsidies; significantly, they also erase legitimate, free-market impediments to the development of nuclear power: the problem of obtaining insurance and the problem of waste disposal. I came up with these examples after only a quick survey of magazine articles; there is still much to be said about the

extent of government involvement. What about the role of the State in the acquisition of plant sites? In funding the construction of power plants through guaranteed loans? These questions remain. But more importantly, where is the libertarian literature analyzing the role of government in the nuclear power industry? And where are the libertarian voices crying out against this dangerous and expensive government intervention?

I suspect that libertarian reticence is explained by the fact that many of us have started out by asking the wrong question — whether we are for or against nuclear power — and have therefore come up with irrelevant answers. Petr Beckmann is a case in point. In the September issue of *Reason*, he spends most of his time defending the feasibility of breeder reactors (The Great Plutonium Scare, *Reason*, Sept. 1977). As libertarians, the verdict of the free market is more important to us than the verdict of any expert, including Mr. Beckmann. Therefore the primary issue becomes the **political** one of keeping the market free. Yet Beckmann never addresses himself to the legislation favoring the nuclear power industry, except obliquely in this stunningly irrational paragraph:

"The fact that (a nuclear power plant in South Carolina) is seeking government support not only has nothing to do with technical feasibility but is, above all, a result of the uncertain climate surrounding nuclear ventures (and, indeed, all large-scale energy projects), which makes investors reluctant to finance them. To attack the process on economic grounds is, as so often with nuclear issues, the tactic of the parenticide who asks the court for mercy on the grounds that he is an orphan."

With one sweeping gesture, Beckmann dismisses any attempt to bring up the only issue relevant to libertarians: government intervention in the industry. While it is true that the effects of regulation in other areas of energy, such as oil, coal and natural gas, have mainly been stifling, with nuclear power the case is not so simple. Government has been literally promoting nuclear power for years, and doing everything within its (un)lawful power to **improve** the "investment climate." Beckmann condemns the intrusion but is deafeningly silent about the collusion. This makes me suspicious.

Conservative aberrations are nothing new to *Reason* magazine, of course, but it is disturbing to see even worse examples in the official organs of state Libertarian Parties. In an article in the Delaware newsletter, *Freedom's Voice*, for example, the writer took as his starting point the irrelevant question, for or against nuclear power, and cheerfully endorsed it. He was aware (who could fail to be?) that nuclear technology was created by the federal government; these, he said, are "sunk costs" that we cannot recover. Yet the writer showed no knowledge of the government subsidies which are not "sunk" and should be terminated immediately. The writer's failure to even mention the Price-Anderson Act is inexcusable, since he borrowed the term "sunk costs" from a *Reason* editorial condemning the Price-Anderson Act!

Why make such a big deal about what may be simply ignorance and inconsistency on the part of some libertarians? There is more to this than mere conservative-baiting. I believe that the Libertarian Party's stand on nuclear power is a crucial litmus test of its members understanding of the revolutionary character of free-market economics. If we are ever going to raise the banner of the free market as an idealistic alternative to the rotting economic status quo, we must be prepared to condemn the powerful business interests that feed on government power, without hesitation. The intellectual consequences of waffling of the nuclear power issue are severe:

- Socialists say, "Capitalism is incapable of long-range investment decisions; we need government planning." And businessmen, masquerading as advocates of the free market, say, "Yes, that's right, let's go

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Technological Facts on Nuclear Energy

1. "Nuclear" doesn't have to mean "bomb." Many people, left and right alike, have knee-jerk reactions to the word "nuclear," which they associate with the bomb. Nuclear power plants are not the same as nuclear bombs. A nuclear reactor, for example, **cannot** explode. Bombs require almost pure U-235, whereas fuel in nuclear plants is only 3 percent U-235.

2. **The risk of severe nuclear accident is slight.** The worst that could possibly happen with nuclear plants is a complete fuel meltdown. Contrary to "China Syndrome" propaganda, a meltdown would **not** penetrate through the earth to China; it would melt down only ten to fifty feet, and there would be little or no problem of ground water contamination. The best estimate is that such a meltdown in a light-water reactor would only occur once in 17,000 years of nuclear reactor operation. Nine out of ten of such extremely improbable meltdowns would cause less than ten deaths through radiation sickness. The worst possible such meltdown would kill 2,300 from acute radiation sickness but would occur no more than once in **one billion** years.

3. **No provable damage from low-level radiation.** There is no provable damage to humans from radiation below a dose of 100 rems. Yet we are talking about processes that emit enormously less radiation than this: for example, the maximum level of radiation permitted at the boundary of a nuclear reactor per year by the NRC is only **one twenty-thousandth** that amount. Alleged problems with doses of radiation below 100 rems are simply straight-line extrapolations with no proof whatsoever. The NRC has adopted the straight-line as an ultra-conservative approach, even though there is considerable evidence that the body can fight off all effects of small doses of radiation. There is evidence that tissue slightly damaged by low doses of radiation will heal itself, evidence bolstered by controlled experiments on animals.

An indication that anti-nuclear activists are not sincerely anti-pollution but simply anti-nuclear in sounding their false alarm about low-level radiation comes from the facts about coal. Aside from the obvious visible pollution, under normal conditions coal-burning plants emit more radiation than nuclear power plants. Yet where is there a massive, impassioned campaign against this coal radiation?

4. **Radiation is radiation is radiation.** In rebuttal, the anti-nuclear people claim that, regardless of the degree of millirems or rems of

radiation, nuclear radiation is of different and worse kind. This is false. The very **definition** of millirem consists of a given amount of biological effect on human tissue by radiation. As far as effect goes, then, a millirem is a millirem is a millirem. Period.

5. **Plutonium has caused no cancer.** Despite much anti-plutonium hysteria, not a single human cancer has ever been positively associated with plutonium. In the early years of the nuclear industry, exposures to plutonium were far above levels now permitted by the NRC. Yet not one of 17,000 plutonium workers in the early industry has died of plutonium-caused health problems. This includes 25 plutonium workers at Los Alamos during World War II who received twenty-five times the currently permitted maximum of plutonium in their lungs. Yet not one of these has developed lung cancer and all in fact are in good health.

6. **The nuclear waste disposal problem, trivial at worst, has been solved.** Nuclear waste is a bogey. At worst, there is far less problem of nuclear waste than from the air pollution generated by coal-fired plants. The nuclear waste disposal problem has now been solved; nuclear wastes can be "vitrified" — converted into glass-like substances insoluble in water and buried in salt beds. France began operating a vitrification plant in the summer of 1978.

7. **Is John Gofman really a libertarian?** The Childs-Mueller clique is touting Gofman as one anti-nuclear scientist who is **really** a libertarian. But just how libertarian is John Gofman? Here is Gofman on the free market in his recent "libertarian" book, **An Irreverent Guide**: "The only criterion (in our economy) is that what is manufactured be saleable at a profit. . . . Better still are those products which, through built-in obsolescence, can insure that the purchaser becomes locked into the system of dependence." Gofman also says that we are providing "slave labor for our multinational corporations, while at the same time the corporations throw an ever-increasing segment of the American labor force on the junk heap of human castaways." He also believes that individuals should not by law be free to choose the alleged risks of working in a nuclear power plant. Gofman claims such prohibition is justified to prevent the supposed genetic damage workers' descendants will receive, for the descendants "did **not** choose to participate." It is difficult, of course, to get our future descendants to "participate" in any of our activities.

Beyond For or Against

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get some government support for our energy enterprises. The climate is too uncertain for private investment."

— The corporate statist says, "Government intervention in the economy stimulates growth and makes socially important projects more attractive to investors." And the businessmen, with an eye toward protecting their unsound investments, say "Yes, that's right, if government takes the risk out of nuclear power by limiting liability and taking care of waste disposal, nuclear power will develop faster than it would privately."

— The Marxists say, "Capitalism is characterized by cynical service of business interests." And the businessmen wink, count their government bailout money, and talk about the virtues of free enterprise.

What can people be expected to think of "capitalism" when presented with statements such as these? Yet this is what all too many "capitalists" are saying, not with their mouths, but with their actions. This kind of situation, in many industries, has weighted down the ideology of the free market with associations of reaction, exploitation, and cynicism. In fact, a free economy is the best protection there is against such plunder and privilege, and the nuclear power industry is a perfect example. Why don't we start telling people this?

There is little to be gained from cooperating with the left in their anti-nuclear crusade. They are against nuclear power per se, not gov-

ernment promotion of it. And of course, the Right supports nuclear power, and sees nothing wrong with government subsidization of it. We must establish a libertarian alternative in the political debate.

To those who have legitimate fears about the costs and dangers of nuclear power, we can say, "Government intervention in the economy has robbed us of the natural economic checks and balances against irresponsible technology that exist in a free economy. We must end government subsidies so that these free market checks and balances are brought back into play. We must also limit government's ability to intervene in the economy so that special interests can never again profit at the expense of public money and safety." To those who sincerely believe in the safety and economy of nuclear power, we can say, "If nuclear power can survive without government subsidies and favoritist legislation, then we will be all for letting the industry develop. Besides, if nuclear power is feasible, in the long run such government involvement will prove to be more of an impediment than a boon. If the industry has 'sold out' to the government, they become subject to more political pressures and regulation than private companies. Furthermore, the special favors handed to the industry undermine public confidence in the safety and economy of nuclear power. If nuclear power was a fully insured, self-sustaining industry the anti-nuclear movement would have little to work with."

In this way we should attempt to make government intervention in the economy the issue, rather than nuclear power as such. If we succeed, we can successfully appeal to reasonable people on both sides. (*Illinois Libertarian*, Jan. 1978)

Review of The Disaster Lobby

By the earlier Roy Childs

If I were to name the single most important book on current affairs that I have read within the last two years, **The Disaster Lobby** would be that book, and there would be no close competitors. Written by the former Vice President and the former Publisher of **Look Magazine**, it is an in-depth journalistic study of the decade stretching from the early 1960's to the early 1970's, which the authors call "The Age of Unreason," and the movement that Ayn Rand has called "the Anti-Industrial Revolution." It is a breath of fresh air in an otherwise polluted intellectual atmosphere.

The Disaster Lobby dates the beginning of "The Age of Unreason" from 1961 with the publication of "the book that killed": Rachel Carson's **Silent Spring**, an unscientific attack on pesticides (particularly DDT) and in defense of the rights of weeds and mosquitos over the rights of man.

With the development of DDT and its first widespread use after World War II, DDT saved — during the first eight years of its use — at least five million lives and prevented over 100 million illnesses. For DDT, the penicillin of pesticides, was the principal chemical used to control "the insect vectors of yellow fever, typhus . . . bubonic plague, cholera, sleeping sickness and dysentery" — **without harming humans or domestic animals**. On the island of Ceylon, for example, the use of DDT had brought malaria under control for the first time in history. By 1961, there were only 110 cases of malaria reported here, and — for the first time in history — no malaria deaths.

Then **Silent Spring** was published, and the press and left-wing intellectuals joined forces under its banner to wage an hysterical campaign against the use of DDT and other life-saving pesticides. Ceylon was only one case where the campaign was successful. "Then, in 1968, seven years later, there were **two and a half million** cases of malaria in Ceylon, and **more than 10,000 malaria deaths**."

Yet no one raised an outcry. No one defended the victims of this outrage.

But "the Age of Unreason" had only begun. **The Disaster Lobby** chronicles its "progress" during the decade which was to follow. The battle flag had been raised: business, technology, science and man

himself were declared to be the enemies of "nature." The people who once littered the streets on "earth day" had invaded the halls of congress and critically important government agencies, attempting to seize control of business and technology and to shackle our economic system with controls destined to arrest progress. The Alaska pipeline was blocked for years, lies about air and water pollution were spread, industrialists were slandered and advertising was censored. And, in a stunning display of hypocrisy, academics such as John Kenneth Galbraith attempted to have a quota system forced on all areas of American life — except academia.

And, as if that were not enough, we now have the energy crisis upon us, a crisis caused by the state and its intellectual henchmen, and have been offered a coercively-imposed "austerity program" to solve the problems which these same people have helped to cause.

The Disaster Lobby pinpoints evasions such as these by the dozens. Did you know about the deaths which resulted from the banning of the use of hexachlorophane in hospitals? About the "population explosion" which doesn't exist? About the fraudulent campaigns against saccharin and cyclamates? About the distortions of facts used to stop industries from producing more oil — or to develop nuclear power and other sources of energy? About the vicious campaign to remove phosphates from laundry detergents — phosphates which are in fact fertilizers, not pollutants — in favor of chemical cleaning agents which are dangerous to human beings? That the quality of the air over major cities — including New York and Los Angeles — has been getting measurably better over the last few decades? You will learn these facts and more in this book.

The Disaster Lobby is more than a startling revelation of suppressed facts; it is a journalistic masterpiece, the kind of rational "muckraking" which doesn't make headlines. It deserves a vast audience; it desperately needs readers and defenders. It is the kind of work which Libertarians and Objectivists hunger for — concrete confirmation of their theories.

I cannot be more blunt, or more enthusiastic: **The Disaster Lobby** is a classic, a heroic achievement, magnificent on every level. Buy it and see for yourself. (**Books for Libertarians**, Jan. 1974)

Excerpt from The Disaster Lobby

By Melvin J. Grayson and Thomas R. Shepard, Jr.

The article that emerged from this one-sided research was what might have been expected. Entitled "The Nuclear Threat **Inside America**" and featured in the **Look** issue of December 15, 1970, it took the position that money-hungry private corporations had teamed up with power-hungry Atomic Energy Commission members to construct and operate nuclear plants that, as a result of corner-cutting to save a few dollars, posed a grave threat to the health of the American public.

A key source of Shepherd's data was Dr. John Gofman of the AEC's Lawrence Radiation Laboratory at Livermore, California. His hatred of the AEC was of such magnitude that he seemed to lose all sense of

balance in describing its members. As quoted in the Shepherd article, Gofman made this incredible statement about those who served on the Commission: "There is no morality . . . not a shred of honesty in any one of them — none. I can assure you, from every bit of dealing I've had . . . there is absolute duplicity, lies at every turn, falsehood in every way, about you personally and your motives."

And this was the man, this Gofman who could find no morality, honesty or truth in an entire government agency, who imagined himself the victim of lies and persecution, upon whom **Look** Senior Editor Jack Shepherd relied for much of the material that went into his article.

SLS Proposal

By Milton Mueller

ENERGY

We favor bold and decisive steps to create a free market in energy. This can only be done by wresting control of energy planning, research, development, production and distribution out of the hands of the state apparatus. In particular, we view the federal military-industrial power elite, and the increasing centralization of the energy industry in their hands, as the greatest menace to freedom and prosperity facing the American economy.

Price control

Only free, unregulated prices can spur a wise use of energy resources and provide the incentive to discover alternative forms of energy. We advocate unconditional decontrol of oil, gasoline, and natural gas prices, on both the state and the federal level. We oppose the "windfall profits" tax as a windfall for the power elite which would put millions of dollars in their hands while crippling the discovery and production of oil and squeezing smaller producers out of business.

Utilities

We call for a free market in the distribution of electricity and other forms of power. State Public Utility Commissions should be abolished, and their grants of monopoly power to utilities ended. We support the right of homes and businesses to generate their own power or to buy power from competing sources.

Nuclear power

We recognize the nuclear power industry as one wholly created, promoted and imposed by the federal government. Its systematic control of the nuclear fuel cycle has led to subsidized inefficiency, health hazards and centralization; that control should be ended regardless of whether the industry is viable without it.

Government control of uranium resources should be ended. Uranium resources on lands stolen from Native Americans and others should be returned to their full control. All government leases of public lands to uranium mining and exploration corporations should be repudiated, and any new contracts left to voluntary agreements between the companies and the rightful owners.

We call for the abolition of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission along with its powers of licensing and setting radiation emission standards. The protection of individual rights, not government bureaucracies with a vested interest in the industry, should regulate nuclear power. If radiation pollution, as charged by prominent physicists and admitted by the NRC, does in fact commit random murder, it should be stopped regardless of government licensing and politically determined radiation standards.

We call for an end to tax-supported, government-owned uranium enrichment plants, and an end to the subsidization of nuclear waste disposal. The Price-Anderson Act must be repealed to force the nuclear industry to bear its own insurance costs and to be fully liable for whatever damage it might cause. We support the efforts of individual states to repudiate the legitimacy of Price-Anderson within their own borders.

Oil

We favor the creation of a free market in oil by instituting a system of full property rights in underground oil and by the

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Current LP Planks

Slightly amended by

Bill Evers and Murray N. Rothbard

ENERGY

We recognize the great mischief that a host of government interferences have caused in the energy industry, and the even greater mischief — amounting to a total regimentation of the American economy and society — that is threatened by recent and proposed interventions.

We oppose all government control of energy pricing, allocation, and production, such as that imposed by the Federal Power Commission, the Department of Energy, state public utility commissions, and state pro-rationing agencies. Thus, we advocate decontrol of the prices of oil, petroleum products, and natural gas. We call for the immediate decontrol of gasoline prices, and elimination of the federal allocation program for crude oil and gasoline. We condemn the proposed "windfall profits tax" which is really a graduated excise tax on the production of crude oil, and which would cripple the discovery and production of oil. We oppose all government subsidies for energy research, development, and operation. We oppose a subsidized federal Energy Security Corporation, which would develop expensive and commercially unviable synthetic fuels. We also oppose its financing via the issue of small denomination bonds, which would rapidly lose their value in an era of inflation. We also oppose government subsidies to a solar development bank for solar energy.

We favor the privatization of the nuclear energy industry. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission should be abolished. Since the nuclear industry, like other industries, has its risks, the Price-Anderson Act, through which the government limits private liability for nuclear accidents, and furnishes partial payment at taxpayer expense, should be repealed. The nuclear power industry, like other industries, should be set free to meet the test of the free market.

We oppose the proposed federal Energy Mobilization Board, which would wield dictatorial powers in order to override normal legal processes. We oppose all government conservation schemes through the use of taxes, subsidies, and regulations, as well as the dictated conversion of utilities and other industries to coal. We denounce all temperature level regulations as despotic and oppressive. We oppose any attempt to give the federal government a monopoly over the importation of oil, or to develop a subsidized government energy corporation whose privileged status would be used as a yardstick for condemning private enterprise. We oppose the "strategic storage" program, any attempts to compel national self-sufficiency in oil, any extension of the cargo preference law to imports, and any attempt to raise oil tariffs or impose oil import quotas. We oppose all efforts to nationalize energy companies or break up vertically and horizontally integrated energy companies or force them to divest their pipelines.

We favor the creation of a free market in oil by instituting a system of full property rights in underground oil and by repeal of all federal and state controls over price and output in the petroleum industry. All government-owned energy resources should be turned over to private ownership.

We consider all attempts to impose an operating or standby program of gasoline rationing as unworkable, unnecessary, and tyrannical.

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SLS Proposal

(Continued From Page 6)

repeal of all price controls, regulations and subsidies governing the oil industry. We condemn nationalization of oil as an authoritarian nightmare that would magnify, not end, the current energy problems.

We call for the immediate decontrol of gasoline prices, and an end to the chaotic and futile attempt of the government to control regional allocation.

We demand that the government lift its control over oil imports. We oppose the "strategic storage" program, any attempt to compel national self-sufficiency in oil, and the scapegoating of OPEC as irrational steps that contribute to international tensions and can lead to war. We condemn as utterly immoral and impractical any threat or attempt to take over Mideast oil fields through military intervention.

We oppose all efforts to break up vertically and horizontally integrated energy companies or to force them to divest their pipelines.

The Federal Energy Bureaucracy

We deplore the growing tendency to centralize control of energy in the hands of federal agencies and the privileged interests which are connected to them. The Department of Energy should be abolished, and its dictatorial powers of price control, regulation, allocation and research and development taken out of the government's hands.

We oppose any federal subsidies to develop expensive and commercially unviable synthetic fuels. Such a program constitutes a massive boondoggle for privileged oil companies at the expense of the overburdened American taxpayer. We are equally opposed to an Energy Mobilization Board that would concentrate federal power in the hands of an agency capable of ignoring legal processes and riding roughshod over businesses and state and local governments.

All attempts to regulate the thermostat settings in private homes and businesses are an insult to the intelligence of the American people, and should be stopped.

We oppose gasoline rationing as unworkable, unnecessary and despotic.

Expanding government control over energy research and development threatens the very foundations of free enterprise, and must be stopped. Such control directs all innovation into those areas desired by the government instead of the people, such as weapons research. Such control also screens out new energy entrepreneurs, fostering centralization and economic privilege.

Alternative energy

The government should keep its hands off solar and other emerging forms of alternative energy, neither subsidizing them nor handicapping them. All energy technology should compete in a free market.

To help overcome the effects of past government intervention in energy, we support a homeowners tax credit for the purchase and installation of energy producing or conserving devices. We support the repeal of all fire codes, building codes and zoning laws which limit the right of property owners to best meet their energy needs.

Current LP Planks

(Continued From Page 6)

PUBLIC UTILITIES

We advocate the termination of government-created franchise privileges and governmental monopolies for such services as garbage collection, electricity, natural gas, telephone, or water supplies. Furthermore, all rate regulation in these industries should be abolished. The right to offer such services on the market should not be curtailed by law.

POLLUTION

We support the development of an objective system defining individual property rights to air and water. We hold that ambiguities in the area of these rights (e.g. the concept of "public property") are a primary cause of our deteriorating environment. Present legal principles which allow the violation of individual rights by polluters must be reversed. The laws of nuisance and tort injury should be modified to cover damage done by air, water, and noise pollution. While we maintain that no one has the right to violate the legitimate property rights of others by polluting, we strenuously oppose all attempts to transform the defense of such rights into any restriction of the efforts of individuals to advance technology, to expand production, or to use their property peacefully. We therefore support the abolition of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Nuclear Power Crisis

(Continued From Page 2)

platform planks (pollution and utilities). More substantively, it fails to recognize that the "windfall profits tax" is not a profits tax at all but a graduated excise tax on crude oil production. As a result, it doesn't explain the mechanism by which the tax would cripple oil production. Likewise it leaves out discussion of important policies and proposals like cargo preference, coal conversion, and yardstick corporations.

On nuclear power, the SLS plank erroneously maintains that nuclear power has so-called "health hazards," and its if-then clause on radiation hardly succeeds in camouflaging its statement that "prominent physicists" (who except Gofman?) and the NRC (where?) speak of "random murder."

In addition, SLS retains its preoccupation with the fact that nuclear power is a government-created industry. This indeed is a historical truth. But we must not assume, as SLS does, that history dictates that this must always be so. Libertarians can make history by denationalizing the nuclear industry.

Finally, there is not a word in the SLS plank about the concept of privatizing the nuclear power industry. Why not? Is the SLS afraid of acknowledging that privatizing is a good thing? Are they against privatizing TVA dams and power plants? Would such concepts upset leftists on campus?

Late Bulletin: LR Suppresses Free and Open Debate on Nuclear Power!

As we go to press, we have just learned (August 22) that the September issue of **Libertarian Review** has failed to carry a joint letter on the nuclear power controversy, signed by 19 distinguished members of the libertarian movement. The letter protested the repeated attacks on nuclear power per se that permeated the issue (the government and risk arguments discussed in our lead editorial).

We don't know if LR intends to suppress the letter indefinitely, or whether it will publish the letter in the October issue. We **do** know that whichever choice it makes, it will have kept the letter from the delegates, alternates and visitors to this LP convention. We **do** know, also, that LR had plenty of time to publish the letter in the September issue if it had so wished. This is part of a growing and distressing pattern of keeping important issues and discussions from the members of the Libertarian Party and movement. In the interest of free and open discussion on vital issues, we hereby print the letter with its list of signatories. The signers range from "left" to "right" within the libertarian spectrum. But they all unite as one in devotion to the free market. Can we say the same for the LR-SLS clique?

The protest letter follows:

Editor, **Libertarian Review**:

We are deeply distressed to see a libertarian publication take a political stand on a technological process as **Libertarian Review** did in its July-August issue by calling for government to oppose nuclear power and promote solar power.

First, LR published an unpaid advertisement on its inside cover that argued that because of the risks associated with nuclear reactors this mode of generating power should be banned. In addition, LR published Patrick Lilly's article in which, although he says he would be willing to let the free market decide such matters, nonetheless he insists that risky endeavors that might prove disastrous should be banned — especially in the case of nuclear power. He did not bother to add that his policy proposal could be extended to banning the airline industry, the sea travel industry, the construction of dams, the construction of tall buildings, etc.

Second, Milton Mueller's article argues that the nuclear power industry is a quasi-nationalized industry and that the decision-makers who made it this sort of industry did so for what they considered important reasons. These reasons are important enough to them for "national security" claims to be made and for them to want to hold onto control of nuclear power. Hence, libertarians, instead of calling for denationalization, should oppose nuclear power per se. On the contrary, it seems to us that libertarians should call for denationalization, an end to subsidies,

and the bearing of the risks of accidents by the companies involved. To take the course Mueller suggests would lead to opposing mail service and highways rather than calling for their privatization.

Third, Wilson Clark, a self-described libertarian — a description nowhere challenged by LR interviewer Jeff Rigenbach — advocates an excess profits tax designed to channel the investments of oil companies in certain directions: namely, "alternative energy sources, increased production from conventional sources or conservation." The tax is designed to prohibit diversification of the companies into non-energy-related fields. Clark also proposes government-sponsored invention contests and a multimillion-dollar joint private-public energy development fund at the state level. Clark deplores the fact that no one is making what he regards as the necessary social transition of a "massive commitment" to windpower or solar energy. Clark claims that private firms will not explore viable energy alternatives because they are "mature" companies, too tired to innovate.

Clark's putatively libertarian views are not libertarian at all — they call for massive tax funding that would deprive people of their earnings; they promise special government grants of privilege to the solar and windpower industries; and they propose to curtail the liberties of businesses to make investment decisions on their own. In fact, on the open market, Clark's "mature" companies would have to innovate to survive.

Clark's views seem to be basically in accord with the "Big Oil" cartoon published in LR's May issue. In that cartoon a businessman identified as "Big Oil" is gloating over the fact that oil companies own most of the alternative resources from which energy could be drawn while he maintains that solar power should not be looked into because it is unfeasible. This cartoon deliberately suggests that oil companies have sought to monopolize energy production, that private ownership of energy resources is inappropriate, that oil companies should be forced to divest their holdings in other energy sources, and that oil companies have deceived the public on the feasibility of solar power. The position espoused by the cartoon run in LR is, in its facts, inaccurate, and in the policy it suggests, unlibertarian. Solar power should stand on its own merits in the free market. Its promotion should be a business matter — not a political one, especially not a political cause backed by a libertarian magazine.

George Smith, Los Angeles
Bill Evers, Palo Alto, Calif.
Sara Baase, San Diego
David Gordon, Los Angeles
Wendy Grosscup, Los Angeles
Ronald Hamowy, San Francisco
John Hospers, Los Angeles
Joe Kalt, Cambridge, Mass.
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