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## Gofman strikes out against nuclear power plants



photo by bob foster

by joan h klein

"Put liability where liability belongs. Tell your congressmen and senators to repeal the Price-Anderson Act of 1957 immediately." That is the advice of John W. Gofman, M.D. Ph.D., guest speaker at Capitol Campus' Gallery Lounge on May 8th. "The day it is repealed," he added, "there will be no more nuclear power plants."

Gofman earned both his Ph.D. in Nuclear Chemistry in 1943 and his M.D. in 1946 at the University of California. He was group leader of the Plutonium Project, Manhattan Project, from 1942-44.

Gofman says he does not feel any guilt for the contributions he made to the development of the atomic bomb. Given the same circumstances, he said, he would repeat those efforts.

He also spoke of his latter involvement as a proponent of nuclear energy. His position in the 1950's was that there is some inherent danger in any source of energy. He felt the advantages of nuclear power outweighed foreseeable problems, "For the stand I took then, I should have been indicted," he said.

Gofman has had a complete change of heart and mind and now says, "We haven't the slightest need for nuclear power." He said we are presently wasting almost 50 per cent of our energy and we should begin there. He added that every effort must be made to find safer, alternative sources of energy.

Asked about the use of coal, Gofman said, "I am no more in favor of killing with knives than with guns." He said, however, that while coal and other sources of energy do present serious problems, the problems of nuclear energy will affect our children's children. "The most depraved thing that we can do is to reach into future generations and create genetic damage," he said.

He suggested the nuclear experiment which America has been involved in is reminiscent of the outrageous experiments on humans which were revealed during the Nuremberg trials. The Atomic Energy Commission sought ways to put nuclear energy to peaceful uses during the post-war years as a justification of its invention, according to Gofman. It was decided to use it to produce "safe, clean, cheap electric

power."

The electric industry appreciated the feasibility of its use, but they are not "Financially dumb." They told the government they would undertake the development of nuclear power plants, but they would not accept the liability of a nuclear accident.

The Price-Anderson Act of 1957 was then passed, which Gofman calls "the single greatest piece of congressional chicanery." The law, which limits the financial liability in a single accident to \$560 million, was re-enacted by congress in 1967 and 1977 in spite of growing concerns and evidence of the dangers of nuclear power.

Gofman told his audience the phrase "low dose radiation" to which area residents have been told they were exposed, is yet another public relations fraud. "There is no safe dose of radiation," he said. "Radiation at any level is dangerous." Scientists estimate there will be a possible 12 deaths as a result of the incident at TMI. This, he said, is a minimum. It could be "120 or 1,120" since no accurate monitoring was done for several days after the accident.

Gofman was questioned about the disposal of nuclear waste. "There is no safe way to handle it; the only solution is not to create waste in the first place," he said. "Do not let them dump the radioactive water in the Susquehanna," he shouted. "The theory that 'dilution is the solution to pollution' is false; It just means you will be poisoned slowly, he said.

Gofman said the incident at TMI was not the first incident of this kind. There was an accident in Alabama four years ago when the cooling system in two reactors became faulty. In his opinion, this means we have been at the brink of disaster three times in four years. He feels, with 71 reactors in operation, it is just a matter of time until we have a full-blown "China Syndrome" type meltdown.

"Unfortunately," he said, "we will have to lose a New York, a Chicago, or a Philadelphia before congress will acknowledge there is a danger." Gofman noted President Carter has declared his confidence in the safety of nuclear power. He suggested, "Let Carter and congress prove their sincerity....Let them repeal Price Anderson."