



J.W.J.

### Energy independence: A nuclear choice?

By J.W. JOHNSON

While we have now passed through another semi-winter—average annual snowfall here 35-43 inches; snowfall this winter less than 18 inches—we would be wise to consider energy and our future. Summer will come, and quickly forgotten will be the need to keep warm which lurks at the end of each summer. This memory lapse is particularly true of the long-range and large-scale energy choices this country must make in the short decades left in this century.

Our participation in the Gulf War said that we value the continued flow of oil as being in our national interest. But the inescapable energy facts are these:

- fossil fuel supplies are dwindling.
- we are being politically and financially blackmailed to obtain the supplies which remain.
- the obvious renewable fossil fuel source (trees) is too inefficient and too environmentally damaging to be used on a large scale.
- Inefficiency on a large scale also holds true for wind, tidal and geothermal alternatives. The choice then comes down to solar or nuclear power. (Coal has not been forgotten: it is lost somewhere in the inefficiency of reclamation, distribution and potential environmental damage.)
- And wouldn't it be nice to wake up tomorrow to discover that solar power was available to every citizen cheaply and without much effort?
- A local solar expert candidly acknowledges, however, that solar energy will never be an inexpensive solution. And what he didn't tell the civic group before which he spoke was that because of the cost, (and in the case of passive solar design, the design itself), techni-

cally efficient solar energy on a large scale will necessarily mean a drastic change in lifestyles from individual prerogative to forced collective living. A placid move toward solar then is unlikely (even unacceptable) in a society such as ours which is characterized by independent minds and spirits which eschew independent living styles.

Society is then faced with the nuclear choice. Often the nuclear question is clouded by fear of its awesome power. The same fear was present when electricity (or any other technology) first came on the scene.

Ultimately, however, the argument against nuclear power boils down to two issues: operating safety of the power plants and disposal of the nuclear waste by-products produced by those plants.

Ironically, the nuclear accident at Three Mile Island served to illustrate another point. After the headlines and hysteria had cleared, it turned out that the accident wasn't as severe as we have been led to believe by a news hungry media. There was no danger of a hydrogen bubble explosion, and on the whole, the plant performed within reasonable safety expectations.

No one died. And the after effects have not spelled tragedy. Persons who've complained of so-called 'nuclear anxiety' from living close to the plant would do well to read fewer headlines and study the question itself.

In large measure, the media, particularly television, magnified the TMI accident to the point where one would have expected to find mutant horrors and a hole in the earth all the way to China the following day.

And even after the hundreds-of-times worse accident at Chernobyl, there remains some room for discussion about the cost/benefit of

nuclear power.

What both nuclear accidents revealed was the sorry state of nuclear plant personal preparedness, not necessarily the problems inherent with nuclear power use.

And why is it that the training of these entrusted with such awesome power and potential for disaster is given a backseat to designing the plant to be foolproof? Is it because we all know that humans will make errors? Besides, machines don't make errors; people do, either in design or operation of the machine; and particularly true if that person is poorly trained for the job.

Following the TMI accident, I spoke to Dr. Edward Teller, a prominent nuclear physicist, and a man sometimes called the father of the atomic bomb.

And Teller was serious when he said that had the pilot who brought him from California to Harrisburg (where we spoke) received a commensurate level of training as a TMI plant operator, then he would have walked from California.

And perhaps the question of nuclear waste has been overmagnified. The waste from one year's operation of a 1000 megawatt nuclear power plant would easily fit under a card table. The ashes alone from a 1000 megawatt coal-fired plant would fill 40,000 trucks.

Yes...nuclear waste has the potential for harming humans. But so do state legislatures who refuse to deal with the problems of drunk driver on the highways, a far more likely way for you to die than from nuclear waste.

In other words, the nuclear question is relative. And with fossil fuels disappearing and other alternatives either too expensive, inefficient, or both for large-scale use, acceptance of the nuclear alternative would very well become relatively attractive.

### Irem summer class to honor Elmer P. Chase

The 1992 Summer Ceremonial Shrine class of Irem Temple will be named the Elmer P. Chase, Jr., class in honor of the long-time Irem Oriental Band director. Announcement of the distinction was made by Irem Temple Potentate, Fred J. Dietrich, Sr. The 1992

Summer Ceremonial will be held at Irem Temple Country Club, Dallas on Saturday, June 13.

Noble Elmer Chase is a resident of Moscow and is retired from Wayne Crushed Stone, Inc., Scranton, where he served as Secretary-Treasurer. He has been associated

with the Irem Oriental Band since 1969.

Under his leadership, the band was judged international champions at the Ottawa Oriental Band Jamboree. He and his wife, the former Madeline Sprandel, have two sons.

## Back Mountain Dance recital



Mallory Carey and Amanda Reese performing 'Dance the blues away'

Dozens of students of the Back Mountain Dance Studio performed their spring recital last weekend at the Lake-Lehman High School auditorium. Hundreds of family members and friends watched and applauded performances by dancers of all ages.

Photos by Charlotte Bartizek



Shanna Baker wowed 'em



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