

End to Nuclear Power in Germany?

Nicola C. Ostertag

When the coalition government of Social Democrats and the Green Party took office in Germany in October 1998, after fifteen years of Christian Democrat rule, one crucial point in their coalition treaty was the future of nuclear power. The wish to abandon nuclear power, once a driving force in the formation of the environmental movement in the 1970s, constituted a central demand in the political program of the Green Party. The two leading parties agreed that within one legislative period, i.e., four years, the use of nuclear power was to be irreversibly ruled out by law. This goal would be reached by changing the appropriate legislation and by coming to an agreement with the privately owned utility companies that operate the nineteen existing nuclear power plants in Germany. Not surprisingly, the latter proved to be the harder part since claims for damages were under discussion.

After months of negotiations, an agreement was signed in June 2000. According to this agreement, the generation of electricity from nuclear energy will be phased out by approximately the year 2020. Without this long time span, the government might have been obliged to compensate the utility companies for what was considered a taking by a number of legal experts. To determine the remaining length of service for the individual nuclear power plants, each facility was assigned a maximum amount of electricity it is allowed to generate before being shut down. The quota was based on the assumption that the regular life span of a plant is 32 years. Allotments may be traded between power plants to ensure that inefficient facilities will be taken off the grid first. No new reactors are to be built and a pending application for licens-

ing must be withdrawn. The agreement also includes a change in policy with regard to the handling of nuclear wastes. So far, a significant share has been shipped to nuclear processing plants in France and Great Britain. As of 2005, waste disposal will be restricted to direct underground storage, possibly on site.

The consensus between politicians and energy companies on this controversial issue was possible because drastic economic sacrifices on either side were avoided. The government will not be sued for compensation since running a nuclear power plant for more than 30 years is not believed to be cost effective anyway. Furthermore, operators have now been given assurance for further planning. Critics who consider nuclear power to be a safe and, in view of CO₂ emissions, a clean source of energy had little understanding for the deal struck. Many environmentalists were also disappointed. They had wished for a shutdown to happen overnight or at least within one legislative period. The agreement turned out to be another grueling test for the members of the Green Party, many of whom struggle with the necessity to compromise.

In the meantime, other questions arise. For the privatized energy sector, the purchase of cheap electricity from nuclear power plants in neighboring Eastern European countries proves a realistic option. Certainly, this was not intended by the government. And why should Germany, which is one of the leading countries when it comes to technology and safety standards in the area of nuclear energy, withdraw and leave this field of expertise to less experienced and maybe less scrupulous countries? Whether or not renouncing nuclear power will be an irreversible move remains to be seen. The political opposition has already announced that it will revise the plan should they win the next elections.

Nonetheless, the decision not to pursue the nuclear track is a political signal and could

be the beginning of an energy policy that concentrates increasingly on higher energy efficiency and the development of renewable energy. First steps have been taken. New legislation requires energy companies to buy electricity from renewable sources. Housing projects with photovoltaic installations are being subsidized, and there are several more initiatives in the works. Yet, a great effort will be required to avoid replacing the current contribution of nuclear energy—12% of Germany's total—with energy from fossil fuel. The promised reduction in greenhouse gases of 25% compared to emission levels in 1990 will not be met this way.

Address correspondence to Nicola C. Ostertag, MES, Neubertstr. 25, 01307 Dresden, Germany; (phone & fax) ++49-(0)351-4425716; (e-mail) nicola.ostertag@smwk.sachsen.de.

New NAEP Members

George Spinelli, Spinelli Investigations, AZ
Joe Pinto, Maricopa County Department of Transportation, AZ

Amy Jerome, Environmental Planning Group, Inc., AZ

Laura Weinstein, Environmental Planning Group, Inc., AZ

Nancy Shelton, Engineering & Environmental Consultants, Inc., AZ

Jennifer Donahue, Environmental Planning Group, Inc., AZ

Marcia Wertenberger, Charis Corporation/Military Projects, CA

Ann Bowles, Hubbs-Sea World Research Institute, CA

Cheryl Karpowicz, Ecology & Environment, Inc., CA

Terri Gross, CA

Kathleen Hill, Humboldt State University, CA

- Catherine Munger, Canada
 Jorine Lawyer, CO
 Brenda Bellonger, North American Indian Legal Services, Inc., CO
 Tom Vinson, CO
 Kimberly Miller, Office of Management and Budget, DC
 Carmela Bedregal, Coastal Systems Intl., FL
 Jose Zornitta, FL
 Ann Johnson, FL
 Kate McGlynn, Coastal Systems Intl., FL
 Stephen Russell, Robins AFB, GA
 David Taitano Jr., Pacific Environmental Resources, Inc., Guam
 Bret Griebenow, INEEL, ID
 Ellen Jurczak, Amtrak, IL
 Nicholas Croy, Steel Parts Corp., IN
 Stephanie Brown, IN
 Gregory Nottingham, IN
 Ruth Kelly, University Of Limerick, Ireland
 Craig Phillips, Directorate of Environment and Safety, KS
 Emily Beavers, Booz-Allen & Hamilton, MA
 Julie Ebbighausen, US DOT, MA
 William Baird, Web Engineering Assoc. Inc., MA
 Krista Graham, OASIS Environmental, MA
 Lana Getubig, EORM, Inc., MA
 Kelby Mowery, MD
 Quentin Rance, MD
 Robert Carton, MD
 Eric Sprague, US Environmental Protection Agency, MD
 Colin Vissering, US Greiner Woodward Clyde, MD
 Jennifer Helfand, MD
 Ronald Lamb, Dynamac Corp., MD
 Nick Ferrala, Binax/NEL, ME
 Sandy Lare, Northern Ecological Associates Inc., ME
 Richard Perritt, University of Southern Maine, ME
 Jeff Simmons, Normandeau Associates, ME
 Donald Maxwell, MI
 Nick Stas, Western Area Power Administration, MT
 Carla Handrinos, NC
 Kay Simpson, The Louis Berger Group, Inc., NC
 T. Mark Westendorff, CZR Incorporated, NC
 Jameson McDermott, CZR Incorporated, NC
 Brian Railo, CZR Incorporated, NC
 Jaclyn Fox, Oxford University Press, NC
 Mitchell Archer, The City of Durham, NC
 David Wolf, Zapata Engineering, NC
 Durrell Ciccio, NJ
 John Hotopp, Louis Berger Group, NJ
 Lynne Krupacs, Department of Defense, NJ
 Mike Henderson, NM
 Edward Skudlarek, State of Nevada-Water Planning, NV
 Joseph Enrico, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, NY
 Andrew Kolikoff, The Sear-Brown Group, NY
 David Quentin, NY
 Charlotte Banzer, West Valley Nuclear Services Company, NY
 Basith Mohammed, OH
 Brian Boose, Ogden Environmental and Energy Services, OH
 Carol Snead, HDR Engineering, Inc., OR
 Ward Ricker, OR
 Sheila Young, OR
 Richard Burns, WIK Associates, Inc., PA
 Janna Lancaster, PA
 Charles Prood, PA
 Alan Makeever, PA
 Brian Hoppy, Engineering Environmental Management Inc., PA
 Richard Enander, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, OTCA, RI
 Barry Wenskowicz, Narragansett Bay Commission, RI
 Sonja Maddox, Wackenhut Services, Inc., TN
 Mark Peterson, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, TN
 Susan Grunoy Jackson, Urban Environmental Associates, TX
 Jennie Brixey, TGE Resources, TX
 Rutherford Wooten, Parsons, TX
 Cindy Sumrall, TX
 Derek Beimgraben, TX
 Robert Grainger, Air Force Center for Environmental Excellence, TX
 Richard Audelo, Randolph-Richards Inc., TX
 Archie Mezancon, Minerals Management Service, VA
 Jeter Watson, VA
 Jean McCarty, Booz Allen & Hamilton, VA
 Kenneth Carpenter, Verizon, VA
 Katherine Peirce, Bonneville Power Administration, WA
 Sharon Brown, WA

New Certified Environmental Professional



David L. Kocour is a Project Scientist with the URS Corporation, which was ranked the second largest engineering design firm by *Engineering News-Record* in 2000.

Mr. Kocour has over 15 years of experience in the fields of environmental science and planning. His experience includes managing and preparing NEPA documentation primarily for transportation projects, managing environmental site assessments, en-