

What Does Term Extension [for Atomic Power Plants] Have to Do with Our Children?

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The term extension for atomic power plants gives us one reason to fear that a new boom in nuclear power is imminent. Let me elaborate. Credible calculations show that renewable energy could dominate the market in the foreseeable future. This would result in a decentralization of the electric power supply, severely weakening the atomic lobby—which consists of internationally active big businesses, banks, and compliant politicians. The debate is “a clear either-or situation,” says Rainer Baake, of the Deutschen Umwelthilfe (DUH) [German Environmental Group]. “Those who would extend the term limits for atomic energy plants today place the priority of renewable energy in jeopardy.” Large profits beckon. According to the analysis of the Landesbank Baden-Württemberg, the operating companies can count on an additional profit of up to 70 billion Euros. It is no wonder, then, that there are attempts to put pressure on the Merkel administration, for example through the Energiepolitischen Appell [Energy-political appeal], a nationwide ad campaign launched by Jürgen Grossmann, head of RWE [a large German electric power company], and signed by 40 top managers and bankers.

The Deutsche Bank argues openly for a “renaissance of atomic energy and encourages its clients to participate financially [though their “S-Box Nuklear Power Index Zertifikate,” an investment instrument specifically for nuclear power sources]. That does not sound like it is planned for just a few years of an extended term. High profits on the one side, 500 tons of radioactive waste every year on the other. Where should the stuff go? To LaHague (in France) and Sellafield (in England)? These reprocessing plants (of atomic waste) pump around 10 million liters of contaminated wastewater into the English Channel and the Irish Sea every day. Or should we send it to Hayek in Russia? Future nuclear waste should be sent there from the interim storage facility Ahaus (in North

Rhine Westphalia). Hayek is a dead zone. “This facility has flushed radioactive waste into seas and rivers since 1949,” writes the Russian environmental activist Vladimir Sliviyak. This will continue to happen in the future. Safe permanent disposal sites (for nuclear waste) do not exist anywhere on the earth.

All this is no problem. The main thing is that the money rolls in. After us, the Deluge. Whoever invests in atomic energy can never say, “The future belongs to the children.” The fact of the matter is, we are spoiling—no, poisoning the future for them. The skull on the leaky drums (of radioactive waste) in the former salt mine, Asse II, near Wolfenbüttel, that threatens to collapse, is a symbol.

A study done in 2007 by KiKK, an epidemiological study of cancer in children in the vicinity of nuclear power facilities, has been nearly forgotten. Through this study it could be proven that young children who live near nuclear power plants have a significantly higher risk of getting cancer. Naturally the study was contested with flimsy arguments. The factor of coincidence was considered in only 16 locations. Regardless, Reinhold Thiel, of the German section of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), came to this conclusion after thorough examination of the circumstances: “Low-level radiation is the most plausible explanation for the cancers of these children.”

Still no problem. The main thing is that the money rolls in.

Sources and for further reading:

Hintergrund 4/10 [www.hintergrund.de]; Graswurzelrevolution 10/10;
Dummy 24/09

Translator’s note: In March 2011 (after this article was published in Germany), Chancellor Angela Merkel’s coalition government announced the repeal of the term extensions for nuclear power plants that had been enacted in September 2010. The term extensions had been modified and extended the moratorium on nuclear power plants put into place by the Green Party in 2000, more than a decade ago. The recent announcement restored the original moratorium time limits, the intent of which is to close all nuclear power plants in Germany by the year 2022. “During the moratorium, we will examine how we can accelerate the road to the age of renewable energy,” Merkel said. [Quote taken from article in the *Huffington Post*: <www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/03/14/germany-nuclear-power-extensions-suspended...> 11/27/2011].