

NUCLEAR POWER LEAVES A TOXIC LEGACY

SO WHY IS THE HARPER GOVERNMENT INVESTING BILLIONS IN IT?

By Jan Malek

Dr. Jim Harding is an anti-uranium mining activist, author of *Canada's Deadly Secret: Saskatchewan Uranium and the Global Nuclear System* and a founding member of the Regina Group for a Non-Nuclear Society. We spoke recently with Dr. Harding. The following is an edited version of that interview.

CP What is happening with nuclear power in Canada in recent years?

JH The industry is talking of a renaissance here as it is in other countries, but the truth is even if it does expand in Ontario, which is the only jurisdiction committed to new reactors, the older CANDUs are going to be hitting that aging point within the next decade. So what they call a renaissance could in reality be a phase-out. But the industry, which is still heavily subsidized by the federal government, is looking for chinks in energy policies, particularly in Alberta and Saskatchewan, and somewhat in New Brunswick.

CP Should nuclear be a part of Canada's energy future?

JH It's going to be, because we're locked into the nuclear waste system. I don't say that happily, but I say that as a realist. One of the reasons I so strongly support no expansion and phasing out as quickly as possible is because you can reduce the spent fuel, which is going to be not only an economic cost, but is going to be a burden to future generations. They won't get any electricity, but they will have to manage these wastes. Canada's well up in terms of the top five countries accumulating nuclear waste, so (nuclear) is going to be in our future. In terms of being a source to generate electricity, the



Anti-uranium mining activist Dr. Jim Harding (left) joins Council of Canadians' Prairie Regional Organizer Sheila Muxlow (right) in pointing out the proposed location for a new nuclear reactor next to Lac Cardinal near Peace River in Alberta.

economics make no sense. The second generation of reactors they are trying to sell to the public don't actually exist – they're prototypes, and where they are trying them in other countries, they are having all the problems they had with the first generation, so it makes little sense economically. And the other sources of generating electricity are coming on so quickly. Renewables will double the electricity from nuclear over the next 15 years with a status quo policy. If we were actually to embrace sustainable and renewable energy that trend could accelerate.

CP Is nuclear really a green form of energy?

JH Well, of course this is the big promotional approach the industry is using. This industry is rooted totally in nuclear weapons and the CANDU is based on a prototype that was actually created to produce plutonium for weapons. Nuclear, when it is fully costed, is at minimum three times the cost of other sources of electricity per kilowatt-hour. "Green" is just the latest of the myths that this industry uses. I've read their literature and I know the designs of the new reactors were not done with the

idea of reducing their carbon footprint. The promotional people in the industry decided this was a good gimmick to try to get into the public – that (the nuclear industry) is part of the climate change solution. If you do a full cycle analysis with nuclear from uranium mining right through to refining to enriching to spent fuel management you actually get a carbon footprint that approaches coal generation. Nuclear is not a green energy when there is full cycle analysis done. It's a fallacy.

CP Is there anything else you think Canadians should know?

JH The other thing I would add is the nuclear industry was the first to get onside with the FTA, which led to NAFTA. And the reason they wanted to was because there was going to be a big push in the U.S. for uranium and it occurred under the Reagan administration. It was not for nuclear power plants – that boom didn't occur. The U.S. was shutting its uranium industry down because it was uneconomical and the liabilities of leaching uranium tailings in the watersheds were high, and mining workers' cancers were beginning to increase. (The U.S.) wanted to have a secure uranium supply system without having to deal with the burdens of the environment or watershed protection, and (Canada) became that. It was written into the FTA under the energy security sectors. They gave Canada the "privilege" of having our uranium enriched through the U.S. enriching system while agreeing to provide security of supply and a guarantee of the market into the U.S. We were locked into those agreements. We would actually have to break NAFTA if we wanted to phase out this unecological and unsustainable industry.

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