



www.safeenergymd.org

October 22, 2008

Justine Solomon, Producer
CNBC
900 Sylvan Avenue
Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey 07632

Mr. Solomon:

On behalf of the Chesapeake Safe Energy Coalition, we are writing to you with regard to a number of statements made in CNBC's airing of "The Nuclear Option" on October 14th and 19th.

First, we appreciate the disclosure that General Electric, the owner of CNBC, is a global manufacturer of nuclear reactors, components and we note nuclear fuel as well. We also acknowledge and appreciate CNBC's effort to offer some balance in the program with the inclusion of critical voices from the Union of Concerned Scientists and Greenpeace.

However, in addition to some factual errors – such as referring to nuclear power as providing 20% of U.S. energy instead of electricity – your program also chose to accept, unchallenged, many industry claims that necessitated not only questioning but investigation. These included prematurely describing new expansion efforts by the nuclear industry as "a 21st century atomic revolution;" that there is little to no opposition to nuclear power in Calvert County, Maryland and in France; that no deaths or injuries resulted from the Three Mile Island accident (impossible to prove given the latent effects of radiation exposure and contrary to the elevated incidence of cancers identified in the unchallenged epidemiological study by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill published in August 1997 by the National Institute of Health's prestigious journal

“Environmental Health Perspectives” <http://www.ehponline.org/docs/1997/105-8/correspondence.html> ; that the Chernobyl accident killed 28 people immediately and only dozens more in the “next four months” when latent long-term deaths estimated in the tens of thousands are cited in “The TORCH Report” from the Greens in European Parliament and where even the World Health Organization now acknowledges 4,000+ deaths; that France is an unqualified “nuclear success” and receives 80% of its energy from nuclear (again it is electricity and in fact, France remains heavily energy dependent on oil); omitted entirely are the long delays and enormous cost over-runs at the two French-owned reactor construction sites in France and Finland; and that your choice as an example of an “environmentalist “ who changed his mind on nuclear power, is the discredited Patrick Moore who is paid to do the nuclear industry’s bidding and who also supports clear-cut logging for the forestry industry and the PVC industry – hardly anyone’s definition of an environmentalist.

As an alliance that opposes a third reactor at the Calvert Cliffs, we would like to call attention to the segment that focused on UniStar’s application to build and operate a 1600 megawatt “Evolutionary Power Reactor” (EPR) on the Maryland shore of the Chesapeake Bay just 50 miles from Washington, DC. The television production explicitly portrayed that a harbinger to the so-called “nuclear revival” is that public “protest” to atomic power is “missing” from the picture of a nearly empty hearing room. Several local business and civic leaders were interviewed who voiced only glowing support for the new reactor.

In fact, there is growing opposition to new atomic development in Maryland.

One aspect of this opposition can be viewed on our coalition website at www.safeenergymd.org. Coalition members Nuclear Information and Resource Service, Maryland Public Interest Research Group, Public Citizen and Beyond Nuclear have intervened in the Certificate of Need proceeding before the Maryland Public Service Commission and have provided expert testimony focused on a critical area that was conspicuously “missing” from your show; the unpredictably large and skyrocketing cost of new reactor construction. In particular, the EPR proposed for Lusby, MD is characterized by Wall Street as financially “most at risk” for its exceedingly large capital costs and the uncertainty of its final “all-in” cost. The \$5.1 billion price tag on a French EPR as offered in “The Nuclear Option” underestimates what is more likely as much as double that figure. Testimony in this proceeding from the UniStar Nuclear chief executive officer estimated Calvert Cliffs-3 costs at “the upper end of \$4,500-\$6,000 per kilowatt or \$7.2-\$9.6 billion.” Moody’s and Standard & Poor’s investor services now place their best guess for new construction costs to exceed \$7,000 to \$8,000 per kilowatt. Given the current global financial crisis, this was a critical omission from your viewers understanding of the full range of risk posed by a most cost nuclear expansion.

As history shows, the nuclear industry's own financial meltdown preceded both reactor meltdowns at Three Mile Island and Chernobyl.

The program similarly portrays through half a dozen interviews that a majority in France support the heavy reliance on nuclear power "with little opposition." To the contrary, annual polls conducted by Gallup Europe consistently show around 60% of the French public in favor of a phase-out of nuclear energy, a remarkable statistic in a country that draws 80% of its electricity (not energy as your reporter stated) from nuclear power. In addition, tens of thousands of French citizens have repeatedly demonstrated in major cities across the country within the last two years against the new EPR reactor. It is unfortunate that CNBC chose to mischaracterize the situation by ignoring French news casts or not interviewing any one of many eloquent and convincing representatives from the French nuclear opposition movement.

Finally, US Nuclear Regulatory Commission chairman Dale Klein cavalierly offers that a deliberate aircraft strike on a nuclear power plant would "bounce off" the reactor building. Both independent expert opinion and NRC public documents show that even if an aircraft struck a reactor building but did not penetrate it, the resulting concussion and resounding vibration throughout the facility would be far more severe than an analyzed earthquake and in fact could cause reactor safety equipment to fail. Moreover, the resulting explosion and fire have not been considered in context of long standing and widespread fire protection violations of federal safe shutdown regulations that persist throughout the nuclear power industry, today. Given that the 9/11 Commission Report identified that US nuclear reactors are targeted, it does not serve the national security interest nor offer public confidence for a federal official to deliberately dumb down the widespread and long term threat that we face from these pre-deployed radioactive targets. The NRC's own publicly available reports show that US reactors were never designed, constructed or evaluated for a deliberate large aircraft attack--including their containment structures. Critical on-site targets like the control room, the spent fuel pool, the turbine hall and the electrical switchyard – all outside of containment – if struck by even smaller private aircraft launched from nearby airfields potentially laden with high explosives could result in a cascading event resulting in a reactor core meltdown. In fact, NRC is only now looking at the design criteria to make new reactors aircraft hazard resistant---but making them impenetrable as Commissioner Klein claimed will not be a new licensing requirement.

Nuclear power is increasingly expensive, polluting, dangerous and unnecessary. We hope that you will consider a subsequent piece that addresses a safer, more secure and sustainable renewable energy policy as exemplified in the Google's Clean Energy 2030 Plan. > <http://googleblog.blogspot.com/2008/10/clean-energy-2030.html> <

Likewise, we encourage your parent company, General Electric, to refocus its considerable resources to participate in making renewable energy the centerpiece of U.S. energy policy for the 21st Century.

Sincerely,

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And on behalf of Chesapeake Safe Energy Coalition partners:

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility

Southern Maryland Citizens for Affordable Renewable Energy Sources
(SO MD CARES)

Nuclear Information and Resource Service

Maryland Public Interest Research Group

Maryland Sierra Club

Public Citizen

Chesapeake Climate Action Network

Clean Water Action