leS. t<' **the NEWS**

by PHYLLIS SCHLA.FLY

Box 618, Alton, Illinois 62002
Phone: **618-462-5415**

RELEASE: APRIL 14

LICENSING NUCLEAR PLANTS

In order o increase our sources of badly needed energy, Energy Secretary James Schlesinger says he wants to reduce the time required to build and license nuclear power plants f.rom 12 years to 6-1/2 years. But Mr. Schlesinger himself is the principal reason why the licensing of nuclear plants takes twice as long as it should.

Mr. Schlesinger says that nuclear power today is "barely alive." One of the major reasons is the many years it takes to license new plants. Each year of delay adds $120 million to the cost of the plant and makes utilities more reluctant to commit such a large amount of their available resources to a project whose completion is so far into the future.

James Sch··esinger is typical of the Federal bureaucrats who offer themselves as the 11expert11 to solve problems that they themselves have created.

When James Schlesinger became chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission in 1972, the agency was ,iedicated primarily to developing atomic energy for both peacetime and military use, and to encouraging and assisting private industry and science to make more and more use of this greatest of all energy sources.

Within about 16 months, Schlesinger converted AEC's mission from c eative development and production of atomic power to a bureaucratic regulatory agency that gave priority to the environmental and ecology extremists over the projuctive efforts of private industry. He drastically reorganized the personnel,cut back the high-level staff, eliminated nonsubservient employees from policy positions, and created the new job of general anager for environmental and safety affairs.

The result was that whereas, under former Chairman Glenn Seaborg nuclear plant could be licensed in five years, Schlesinger stretched this out so that it takes 10 to 12 years.

(more)

There is hardly any way to calculate the tremendous costs in terms of the sorely-needed energy that was never produced (thereby increasing our dependence on foreign oil), the financial capital tied up, and the intellectual and technological resources imprisoned in nonproductive channels. With 200 nuclear plants under consideration, industry has tied up a commitment of $100 billion - with at least a decade before any return can begin.

Even wo se than the impounding of money because of the bureaucratic delay is the lockup cf brainpower required by the Schlesinger policies. To license a nuclear power plant, there must be a preliminary study that takes two years and proiuces, literally, two tons of paperwork. This means that our most brilliant, most experienced, and most extensively and expensively trained scientists and technologists are condemned to devote their capabilities and their irreplaceable time to use1,:!ss, noncreative "busy work."

All this came about during the Schlesinger tenure as AEC Chairman. Most of it he brought about in the administrative process. Some of it was caused by legislation, but Schlesinger did not oppose the legislation effectively. He just let a coalition of antinuclear environmentalists and public interest lawyers throw roadblocks in the path of developing new U.S. energy sources.

The best move President Carter could take would be to appoint an Energy Secretary wi+.h a demonstrated commitment to the development of domestic power sources, including the expediting of the licensing of nuclear plants, plus expertise in exposing the artificial nature of the skillfully exaggerated "threats" to the environment which are constantly paraded to frighten us.

The last time I went through O'Hare Airport, some demonstrators were carrying sigr.s reading, "Nuclear power is safer than sex."That is probably an understateme1t.

(end)