

The Sensible Environmentalist

Time To Rethink Nuclear Energy

(NAPSA)—**DEAR DR. MOORE:**

I've heard that the U.S. wants to increase its reliance on nuclear power. Did Chernobyl and Three Mile Island teach us nothing?



Dr. Moore

Chernobyl and Three Mile Island taught us a great deal, but not what people tend to think. Chernobyl was a disaster waiting to happen. In addition to poor management, the reactor

was badly designed and didn't have a containment shell to prevent the escape of radioactive materials if something went wrong. Three Mile Island, on the other hand, demonstrated the relative safety of current-generation nuclear power plants. Although the reactor itself was destroyed, the core was completely contained.

In the U.S., nuclear power is the second-largest source of electricity, with about 100 plants providing 20 percent of the total. The U.S. administration points to the fact that nuclear power is clean and cost effective, and says that it must remain a major part of its national energy policy. (It's also fairly abundant.) What's interesting is that, with the mounting threat of global warming, an increasing number of environmentalists are also voicing their support. These people have come to believe, as I do, that nuclear power is the best way to drasti-

cally cut fossil fuel consumption while still satisfying the global demand for energy.

The U.S. has chosen not to become part of the Kyoto Protocol, so despite the fact that it generates one-fifth of the world's greenhouse gases, it isn't yet bound by international treaty to cut its emissions. However, global warming is a global problem and cuts are inevitable. Companies such as American Electric Power, which is a leading emitter of carbon dioxide, have pledged reductions in the spirit of Kyoto and believe that the U.S. will someday sign a global treaty.

In the meantime, an aggressive program to develop renewable energy sources such as wind, geothermal, biomass and hydro, coupled with an expanded nuclear energy program, could result in a massive drop in greenhouse gas emissions.

Consider the track record. More than 600 nuclear power plants operate around the world, largely without incident. Given the risks associated with continued fossil fuel consumption, it makes sense to give nuclear power its due as an abundant, clean and—most important—safe source of energy.

Dr. Patrick Moore has been a leader of the environmental movement for more than 30 years. A co-founder of Greenpeace, he holds a PhD in ecology and a BSc in forest biology. Questions can be sent to Patrick@SensibleEnvironmental.com.