

Reactor Reaction

Worries over possible terrorist attacks on nuclear reactor crop up at local board meeting

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On Monday, May 6th, Bronx Community Board #9 held a subcommittee meeting of the Public Service/Housing Committee at their offices at 1967 Turnbull Avenue where a representative from the NYC Close Indian Point Campaign presented a resolution for the board's consideration

The informal meeting consisted of only six people, including Elizabeth Shanklin of NYC Close Indian Point, an organization behind a resolution for the immediate closing of the nuclear power plant. She described a frightening scenario of death and destruction at the hands of terrorists targeting the Indian Point plant.

"The Indian Point Nuclear Power Plant is an attractive target if you think about it. It's only 24 miles from New York City," said Shanklin. "Since September 11th, New York is a proven target for terrorism."

According to Shanklin, the Indian Point Nuclear Plant should have been closed because there is no viable evacuation plan. She said that Governor George Pataki set forth a plan of evacuation that is totally unacceptable for the health and safety of the people of New York City. Part of Governor Pataki's plan calls for an evacuation of the people within a ten mile radius of the plant. The problem is that the "peak fatality zone," that is, the area around which it is likely people will be killed, is a 17.5-mile radius, and the "peak injury zone" is a 50-mile radius. Yet incredibly, some people are to be evacuated into towns within the 10 to 50 mile radius under the Pataki plan.

Shanklin also introduced the resolution that her group and others want the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to bring to the City Council regarding the Indian Point facility. It called for the immediate shutdown of Unit Two and Unit Three reactors at the site and an independent panel review of the facility's vulnerabilities, security measures and evacuation plans, as well as the establishment of a no-fly zone around the plant.

"Thirty-Seven villages in Westchester

County have already adopted the resolution, so New York is a little slow getting started," said Shanklin.

Some experts believe the Indian Point Nuclear Power Plant is a prime target for terrorists because of its proximity to 20 million people, as well as to the West Branch, Croton and Kensico reservoirs which supply New York City's drinking water. According to Riverkeeper, an environmental organization founded by Bobby Kennedy, Indian Point's proximity to New York's financial centers and its poorly defended radioactive targets make it a prime target. These radioactive targets include stored waste and water used for cooling.

In addition, Indian Point's #2 and #3 reactors have earned a "Red rating," the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's worst rating for poor maintenance and management. Indian Point is the only reactor in the country to carry the rating, a mark that makes the reactor the worst in the country.

Shanklin claims that the Indian Point plant even dumps radioactive waste into the Hudson River. Supporters of Indian Point's continued operation, say that without Indian Point, there will be constant blackouts in the city and much higher energy prices. Not so, says Riverkeeper. Renewable energy sources such as wind and solar energy are viable alternatives.

But, while the United States government has spent \$150 billion on energy subsidies for wind, solar and nuclear power, 96.3% has gone to nuclear power.

According to Shanklin, President George Bush has said that he wants to build 50% more nuclear power plants than we have now. So, Republicans like Governor Pataki basically want to keep the plant in operation for political reasons, he claims.

The campaign to close Indian Point counts among its supporters, the Coalition of Black

Trade Unionists, Congressman Major R. Owens, (D-11 Congressional District, Brooklyn), U.S. Representative Nita M. Lowey (D-Westchester/Queens/Bronx) and Carl McCall, candidate for governor.

With the push from organizations like NYC Close Indian Point, Riverkeeper and the Indian Point Safe Energy Coalition and others, there will soon be more names to add to the list. Indian Point opponents say nuclear power produces only about 20% of New York State's electricity.



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