

#### 4-14-11 TVA Board Meeting Comments

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Board Chairman, Tennessee Environmental Council

There is little consolation in being able to say I told you so about TVA and nuclear power. Over 30 years ago many voices including my own warned of the folly of relying on this risky power source for our electricity. All of us wish the terrible accident and release of radiation at Fukushima had never happened. Once the radiation escapes containment and enters our biosphere it will remain to harm all life until it undergoes its own rate of radioactive decay, with each decay event a danger to living cells in a silent game of Russian roulette.

First there was the near miss at our own Browns Ferry plant in 1975, next the melt-down and near explosion at 3 Mile Island. Finally the horror of Chernobyl effectively halted the headlong advance into nuclear madness. In the ensuing 25 years the nuclear industry has lurked like a cancer in remission. Existing plants were creating 1000's of tons of radioactive waste but new construction was mostly stopped.

Now the awful downside lessons are being relearned by a new generation: a major accident at a nuclear plant is unlike any other industrial accident. With large areas rendered uninhabitable for generations and radiation spreading all over the world. A new set of "unpredictable occurrences" has exceeded all of the safety measures we had been told were "fool-proof". It has been troubling, though not unexpected, to hear the rationalizations, explanations, and assertions of how it cannot possibly happen here from the supporters of nuclear power. We are being told our reactors are just too perfect to fail in such a devastating manner. Those assurances are less and less believable.

What will it take for us to forever turn away from this technology that creates enough radiation to render the earth uninhabitable should it all escape containment? The waste created by nuclear power needs to be isolated for hundreds of thousands of years. After over 60 years of nuclear power generation there is no long term solution for highly irradiated waste anywhere on the planet. No one has been able to figure out what to do with this stuff. Reprocessing is an environmental and proliferation nightmare.

Scientists place the arrival of the first humans in North America at about 40,000 years ago. That timeframe is a fraction of the time that these wastes will need to be kept out of our environment.

The legacy of nuclear waste is a shameful inheritance to leave future generations. We must abandon destructive technologies that are poisoning our planet. TVA has gotten it right that we must move away from coal, but dead wrong that nuclear is the answer. We must embrace energy efficiency and carbon-free and nuclear-free energy generation because our future depends on it.