



A Welcome Endorsement for Nuclear Power

Joshua S. Goldstein is emeritus professor of international relations at American University and a research scholar at the University of Massachusetts. Steven Pinker is professor of psychology at Harvard University. These two recently teamed up to pen a lengthy column in the *Boston Globe* entitled “Inconvenient Truths for the Environmental Movement.”

The two men do believe climate change is caused by human action. They contend that burning of fossil fuels to produce electricity by humans — resulting in carbon dioxide being sent into the atmosphere — causes a rise in the earth’s temperature. There are growing numbers of scientists who disagree. But, unlike most of the would-be banners of fossil fuel, Goldstein and Pinker’s solution doesn’t target its use in generating electricity. They thereby separate themselves from environmental extremists who insist that the carbon dioxide byproduct of burning coal and oil to produce electricity is a hazard serious enough to ban the practice. Then they present a strong case for nuclear power.

Here’s how these two educators addressed this topic: “Nuclear power is the world’s most abundant and scalable [reachable] carbon-free energy source. In today’s world, every nuclear power plant that is not built is a fossil-fuel plant that does get built.... Yet the use of nuclear power has been stagnant or even contracting.” Their point, of course, is that by not relying on nuclear power, the need for burning coal and oil cannot be avoided if electricity is needed — which it surely is. They then make the point that solar and wind power amounts to a mere one percent of the need and cannot be counted on to meet the needs for electric power.

Aware of the fears surrounding nuclear power, Goldstein and Pinker point out that the 2011 Fukushima accident in Japan killed no one. But, they note in sadness, it unnecessarily led Germany to shut down some of its nuclear plants. In France where nuclear power produces three-quarters of the nation’s electricity, environmentalists are forcing a shutdown. And the anti-nukes in America also wrongly claim that Japan’s nuclear accident is reason to abandon nuclear power here.

Many Americans can recall the 1979 mishap at Pennsylvania’s Three Mile Island plant. No one died and no one was even hurt. A camper who might have set up his tent right outside the injured plant would never have received any unwanted radiation during the fright-producing coverage of the incident. Pro-



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nuclear scientist Dr. Edward Teller worked himself into a state of exhaustion attempting to refute the nonsense about this accident being spread by Ralph Nader, Jane Fonda, and others. He actually suffered a heart attack and claimed his countering of the misinformation aimed at the American people led to him to being “the only victim of Three Mile Island.”

Late Colorado University Professor Petr Beckmann, the author of *The Health Hazards of Not Going Nuclear*, consistently sought to counter fears about the use of nuclear power. He pointed to the numerous deaths resulting from mining and transporting coal for power generation and the corresponding safety in the use of nuclear power. Pittsburgh University’s Dr. Bernard Cohen, the author of *Nuclear Science and Society*, noted the safety associated with nuclear power production. Before he passed away, he stated: “The radiation that a person is exposed to by living within 25 miles of a nuclear plant is less than he would get from one coast-coast airplane flight every ten years.”

America should turn to nuclear power for its electricity. We are grateful to Goldstein and Pinker for saying so.

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