

Another Voice: Nuclear power is not the answer to our energy needs

- ***By Another Voice***

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There are some of us still alive today who were here when the first atomic bomb was exploded on July 16, 1945, near Socorro, N.M.

That test was code-named Trinity. Within one month, on Aug., 6, 1945, the United States dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan. Another was dropped Aug. 9 on Nagasaki. At least 200,000 people were killed instantly. After the war, we developed procedures to harness the power of nuclear material to make steam and electricity.

In 1953, President Dwight Eisenhower proposed “Atoms for Peace.” Those of us in our 70s, 80s and 90s well remember “duck and cover,” the drill to hide under our school desks to protect us if an atomic bomb exploded nearby.

We also remember “The Atom is your Friend,” with lovely animated characters assuring us that nuclear power was an enormous contribution to civilization. Or was it?

I won't go into the dangers of nuclear war right now, except to say that the Doomsday Clock, which gives a scientific approximation of the probability of global catastrophe from nuclear war, is at 2.5 minutes to midnight, not this close since the 1950s.

But let's look at nuclear power, since it is being promoted as the solution to climate change. Those of us who live in Western New York have intimate relationships with nuclear material because the Manhattan Project, which conducted research on the atomic bomb, had facilities here.

Many here died from unprotected exposure while working on that project and, in fact, some land in our region remains contaminated with nuclear material. Since the 1970s,

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nuclear waste from energy and military production has been stored at the **West Valley Demonstration Project**, a nuclear waste facility 30 miles south of Buffalo.

This site is still being “studied” to figure out what to do, and in the meantime, it is leaking.

After more than 70 years of exploding bombs and splitting atoms, we do not know what to do with the deadly waste, much of which will persist on the Earth for 10,000 years.

Here in Western New York we have more nuclear problems than **West Valley** and illegally disposed of waste. We are a route for shipping liquid, highly radioactive waste from Canada to South Carolina. Further, we live in a state where the governor proposes to offer a \$7.6 billion subsidy to a private company – Exelon – so it can continue running aging nuclear power plants in our state, generating more dangerous waste. This in spite of excellent science that argues that nuclear power worsens climate change. Remember, there is no safe level of exposure to nuclear radiation.

No one asked us if we wanted to split the atom; no one has said he was sorry. In my lifetime, we have spread lethal material across the globe. Perhaps in the lifetime of my grandchildren we should find, contain and secure the deadly nuclear waste and pledge to not make anymore.

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