



Are These Our Neighbours?

People who advocate nuclear power as a safe form of energy and those who oppose it.

The only light for them was a great, spontaneous blaze—a fearful sight to see! And in their terror, once that sight had vanished, they thought what they had seen more terrible than ever.

Wisdom 17:16

Background

The use of power and energy is integral to modern living. We can trace its massively increased use to the coming of the industrial revolution. Three features in particular have contributed to the growth of energy use:

- the growth of urban conglomerations,
- the industrialized production of goods in factories,
- the use of oil based transportation.

Definitions:

Non renewable resources: are materials that are destroyed when converted into an energy source. Examples are coal, oil, natural gas, uranium.

Renewable resources are defined as gifts of nature such as sun, wind, water and geothermal power capable of continual reuse.

Yellow Cake is a semi-refined uranium ore. (It poses no radiation threat prior to processing)

Half Life is the time taken for half of the atoms in a radioactive material to undergo decay. (e.g. in uranium 4½ billion years.)

Problem

At issue are the health and safety of populations and the preservation of the environment.

The essential debate is the pollution resulting from non renewable resources such as coal, oil, natural gas and derivatives such as gasoline as opposed to uranium and its derivative, nuclear energy.

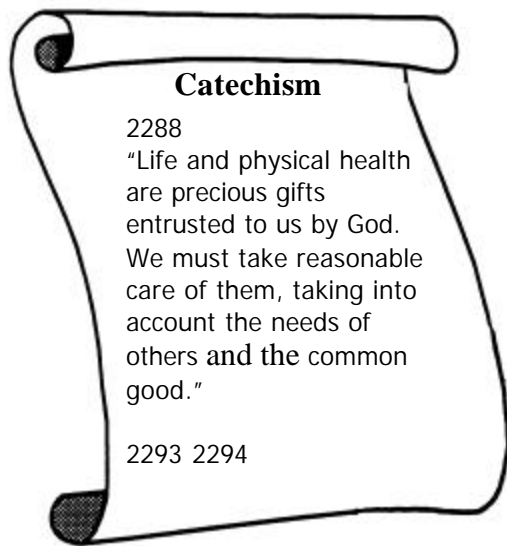
Nuclear energy is relatively new coming after the use of nuclear materials for war purposes in mid 1945 with the first commercial power stations being built in the 1950s.

Today nuclear power stations are found in parts of Europe and in North America.



Traditional fuels produce major pollution damage (e.g. smog in Toronto, Mexico City, The Brown Cloud in Asia). The use of nuclear fuel is initially cleaner but disposal problems have not been solved and the potential destruction to all life resulting from a nuclear accident either at a mining site or at a power station is horrendous. A well financed propaganda campaign by the nuclear industry does not help the making of balanced decisions on which type of fuel to use in the future.

The issue of the safe transportation and waste disposal with no long term adverse effects, particularly nuclear fuels, must be a major factor in any decision



"Nuclear waste violates earth's sacredness, and threatens human health and the environment"

Rufina Laws, a Mescalero Apache activist.

"Basic to all our concerns is not only human health, but the health of the planet itself and everything that subsists in it"

CWL brief

"The heritage of nature is limited and it is being intolerably polluted."

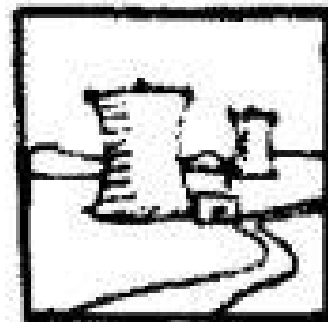
Laborem Exercens, John Paul II, 1981

References

1. Energy Probe.
2. Natural Resources of Canada.
3. Interchurch Uranium Committee Educational Cooperative.
4. Northwatch
5. Web sites
6. The reference section for Nuclear Weapons may also apply
7. Star Phoenix weekly column Paul Hanley

Speaker Resource

1. Interchurch Uranium Committee Educational Cooperative
2. Nuclear Industry in Saskatchewan e.g. Cameco
3. Proponents of alternative energy sources such as wind and solar.
4. Government committee on environment.
5. Kairos, an ecumenical social justice action group.



Discussion questions

1. Investigate the costs of various energy sources including the subsidies by governments.
2. Gain information about government programs to assess and counteract the pollution caused by present fuels.
3. Explore alternatives to more efficient use of fuels in transportation such as rail being one alternative to road travel, and the use of alternative fuels ex ethanol for vehicles.
4. What is the Kyoto Protocol?
5. What alternatives to employment are there for those who are presently part of the uranium industry?
6. Discover the essential principles of the aboriginal people in their beliefs about the sacredness of the earth.

Suggestions for action.

1. Form prayer groups which explore and participate in aboriginal spirituality.
2. Practice the principles of energy conservation promoted by the ecumenical social justice group Kairos.
3. Facilitate public forums to discuss the problems associated with energy production.