

Insight

JULY 2004

Nuclear Energy Can Avoid Global Warming, Ecologist Says

Call it an international wakeup call. The British newspaper *The Independent* last month met morning readers around the world with a pointed message from one of the deans of the global environmental movement and trusted authority on the effects of greenhouse gases. The message: Wide-scale use of nuclear energy is the only option to avoid environmental disaster from the potential effects of global warming.

In a front-page article, Britain's premier environmental scientist James Lovelock declared that environmental changes caused by global warming have accelerated, and that the only option now for policymakers is to encourage the growth and wide-spread adoption of nuclear energy.

Lovelock, 84, was one of the first environmental scientists to raise alarm over global warming. He also is the progenitor and leading proponent of the Gaia Theory—the idea that the Earth is one giant living organism that regulates itself in order to sustain life.

“[W]e cannot continue drawing energy from fossil fuels, and there is no chance that the renew-



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A renowned U.K. scientist says nuclear energy is a solution to reducing greenhouse gases.

ables, wind, tide and water power can provide enough energy and in time,” he said. “If we had 50 years or more, we might make these our main sources. But we do not have 50 years. ... Even if we stop all fossil fuel burning immediately, the consequences of what we have already done will last for 1,000 years.

“By all means, let us use the small input from renewables sensibly, but only one immediately available source does not cause global warming and that is nuclear energy.”

Lovelock, a member of the scientific and honorary committee of Environmentalists for Nuclear Energy, later chided his fellow environmentalists for exaggerating the risks of nuclear power and creating irrational opposition to the widespread use of such a comparatively clean energy source.

“Opposition to nuclear energy is based on irrational fear fed by Hollywood-style fiction, the Green lobbies and the media,” Lovelock wrote. “These fears are unjustified, and nuclear energy

from its start in 1952 has proved to be the safest of all energy sources. ... If we fail to concentrate our minds on the real danger, which is global warming, we may die even sooner.”

Lovelock continued, “Even if [environmentalists] were right about its dangers, and they are not, its worldwide use as our main source of energy would pose an insignificant threat compared with the dangers of intolerable and lethal heat waves and sea levels rising to drown every coastal city of the world.”

Lovelock's statements have been widely circulated, with their most immediate effect in the United Kingdom. Former British Energy Minister Brian Wilson said, “I hope that many others will follow him in questioning the basis of their hostility to nuclear power in the age of global warming.”

The comments reverberated far beyond the United Kingdom; however, as journalists around the world picked up on his charge that nuclear energy is unfairly maligned.



Ecologist James Lovelock believes “opposition to nuclear energy is based on irrational fear.”