# opinion

# N-plant crisis reveals peril

The crisis at Pennsylvania's Three Mile Island nuclear plant should remove any lingering doubts about the undesirability of fission as an energy-generating technology and the willingness of its proponents to play with lives to save N-power profits.

A week of misstatements and denials by utility and governmental officials—with subsequent, forced admissions—regarding the technological flaws and human errors that led to a mounting peril for a million Pennsylvanians continues a tradition of misinformation built by supporters of nuclear energy.

## ours

This tradition of misinformation has its roots in a more general economic dynamic peculiar to American enterprise. The high capital investment for building and operating nuclear facilities such as Three Mile Island's or Oregon's own Trojan plant, when combined with the threatened loss of potentially large profits, dictates a constant underestimation of risk and overstatement of the efficiencies in nuclear technology.

The big-money issues involved has also led in recent years to the sizable financial support given by utility companies to kill ballot measures—including some in this state—that would require greater safeguards or place other restrictions on nuclear-power facilities.

Apologists for the industry, including certain Carter administration officials, claim that the "precedent" of Three Mile Island proves the safety of nuclear power. Such a portrayal of the Pennsylvania crisis sounds to us like just so much whistling past the graveyard (metaphorically speaking, we hope).

Along with the still unsolved disposal problems of highly poisonous and long-lived nuclear waste (accumulating at an ever-faster rate as additional N-plants come into operation), Three Mile Island demonstrates that the risk of a possibly fatal accident is not quite the million-to-one shot that has been claimed. That risk will more than double in the next few years as 92 nuclear plants now under construction are added to the 70 already in operation.

The only lasting solutions to America's chronic energy problems is to be found in conservation and in the development of truly safe alternative sources of energy, which may include solar, geo-thermal, wind and/or fusion technologies. Public revenues would better serve the public interest if they were directed toward these areas rather than promoting, defending and cleaning up after nuclear fission.

## theirs


## yours

# South Africa foes target bank

On Friday, April 6, People for Southern African Freedom will launch its public campaign in Eugene to oppose bank loans to South Africa.

Much has been written and said about the institutionalized racism of South Africa, about its economic oppression and denial of basic rights to the non-white majority of its population.

It has also become clear in recent years that outside economic and political support is vital to the survival of the apartheid system. We maintain that it is the responsibility of Americans to cut off the assistance that the U.S. now provides to apartheid.

People in the Eugene area have demonstrated their support for human rights in South Africa. In 1977 students at the University voted in favor of divestment of all South Africa-related stocks owned by the State System of Higher Education. (This issue is still in the courts.) In January 1978 the Eugene City Council voted to condemn the sale of the Krugerrand, the South African gold coin.

Now, in response to a national Campaign to Oppose Bank Loans to South Africa, we wish to draw attention to yet another form of support the U.S. economy gives to apartheid. The U.S., with more than $2.7 billion in loans outstanding, provides a major part of the $9.8 billion South Africa has borrowed from foreign sources. We feel this money could be put to better use creating jobs and improving our local communities.

Here in Eugene we are focusing on the role of the U.S. National Bank of Oregon. As one of 62 banks which holds stock in the Private Export Funding Corporation (PEFCO) — the ninth largest lender to South Africa — U.S. National has participated in substantial loans to corporations trading with that country. These loans have totaled $176 million since 1973.

Many groups and individuals hold the same views we do about apartheid and about racism that persists in the U.S. For example, the Oregon Federation of Teachers, Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation (GTFF), University YWCA, Campus Christian Ministry, and others are closing their accounts with U.S. National.

The U of O Black Student Union, which doesn't bank with U.S. National, is co-sponsoring the withdrawal activities.

We hope that the economic pressure of the bank withdrawal campaign will persuade U.S. National to change its policies. In the meantime, the campaign begins in earnest on April 6. Pickets and leafleting will take place at the campus branch from 12-2 p.m. and at the downtown branch (8th & Willamette) from 4-6 p.m.

We encourage people to join us and withdraw their accounts at those times. Those closing their accounts should write to the bank manager or president explaining the reasons for their withdrawal. You can contact us through Clergy and Laity Concerned, 1424 Kincaid, 485-1755.

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**Bob Guildin**
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