



school physics class. Hesla says, "They should kick back and for once let the scientists be at the audience's mercy rather than the other way around."

— Shannon Finnell

NUKE POWER: SUBSIDIZED, DANGEROUS

There is no energy source more controversial or heavily subsidized in this country than nuclear power. What was once viewed as the wave of the future has devolved into a corrupt, bloated, dangerous and expensive way of producing electricity, according to panelists speaking March 5 on "Nuclear Power: An Ineffective, Expensive, and Dangerous Response to Climate Change" at the Public Interest in Environmental Law Conference (PIELC).

The panel discussion preceded the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disasters in Japan by less than a week.

In 1954, Lewis Strauss, chairman of the United States Atomic Energy Commission, described nuclear power as "electrical energy too cheap to meter." Today, the most favorable statistics for nuclear power put it at 15 cents per kilowatt-hour of energy produced, almost twice that of wind power. Added on to the higher price of the energy produced is the staggering price of maintaining and building nuclear power plants, the panelists said. It costs up to \$12 billion to construct a nuclear reactor, and,

as Kevin Kamps of Beyond Nuclear pointed out during the panel discussion, the government has spent tens of billions of dollars dismantling older reactors. Absent the support of private investors, the federal government and American taxpayers have had to pick up the exorbitant bill for this power, he said.

The U.S. nuclear program "collapsed fundamentally when Wall Street soured on it," said Dr. Arjun Makhijani, president of the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research.

Nuclear power makes up over half of the federal budget for research and development. The Energy Policy Act of 2005 provided \$20.5 billion in new nuclear loan guarantees. The risk of loan default on a nuclear loan is above 50 percent. And as stipulated in the Price-Anderson Act, a nuclear plant would only pay \$10 billion in the event of a "catastrophic event"; taxpayers would pay for the rest of the damages, he said.

"The 'nuclear freight train' gets its engines going through federal subsidies," said Diane Curran, an environmental lawyer.

Radioactive waste is another contentious issue, the panelists said. The 24,000-year half-life of plutonium renders the element dangerously radioactive for a longer time-span than humans have been on this earth. There is still no permanent storage facility for nuclear waste.

"You can't just stop using nuclear power," Makhijani said. "It needs to be phased out." — John Locanthi

UO Health Assessment Study

The Motor Control and Cognition Lab at the University of Oregon is investigating the health outcomes of long-term practice of Tai Chi, sitting meditation, or aerobic fitness (five or more years, three times per week for 30 minutes per session). We are testing citizens in the cities and outlying areas of Eugene and Springfield, Oregon. **If you have been generally sedentary for five or more years we'd also like to test you.** We can pay \$10 for four hours of testing done at your convenience. We will provide you with a Health Status Report and any information gained from the overall study. Email thawkes@uoregon.edu for further information.



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