

Lilienthal Protests Use of Funds and Brains for Atomic Power

By JOSEPH L. MYLER
United Press International
Washington —(UPI)— Back in 1945 a glamorous newcomer known as "the peaceful atom" was promising to transform the world.

Today's youngsters may find this hard to believe, but 18 years ago atomic energy was every bit as enthralling as space exploration is now.

All that power in such small packages! It was Arabian nights magic made real by 20th Century science.

In many a 1945 imagination, atomic energy already was performing prodigies—making the deserts bloom, for one thing, driving supersonic airplanes around the world, for another, and generally revolutionizing everybody's way of life.

But this is 1963. What happened to this 1945 dream of a new world of atomic plenty? It has "proved long since unattainable." It has turned into a "will-o'-the-wisp." The amazing changes forecast 18 years ago "just aren't in the cards." In short:

The glamor, the excitement, of the boundless possibilities of power from the peaceful atom is gone.

Who says all this? A man who once believed as strongly as anybody in the promise of the peaceful atom, a man named David E. Lilienthal.

Lilienthal was the first chairman of the Atomic Energy commission, the civilian agency created by congress after World War II to be custodian and developer of both the military and the peaceful atom.

Recently, in a series of lectures at Princeton university, Lilienthal recalled the mood of congressmen, scientists and industrialists which resulted in creation of the AEC, "armed with billions of dollars and the broadest of powers."

This, he said, was "a radical step." It led to a "prodigious scale of effort, unheard of expenditures of public money, fantastic absorption of a large portion of the scientific and technical and industrial resources."

Creation of the AEC, in the light of what men believed in 1945, was a good thing, Lilienthal said. The commission under five chairmen has done a fine job. Atomic power has proved feasible. The atom has given the nation the arms it had to have. Some day surely it will play an important role in space exploration.

Peaceful Atom?

But what about that 1945 vision of the peaceful atom and a new world?

"Today," Lilienthal said, "No one expects or even predicts that some magic of technology will be found whereby electricity from the atom can be produced so cheaply and abundantly as to cause profound changes in our present way of life."

From the beginning, congress has appropriated nearly \$30 billion for the atomic project. Most of this has gone to develop the military atom. The peaceful atom, probably, has claimed no more than \$4.5 billion of the total.

But what concerns Lilienthal is that, despite the dashed early hopes, atomic power is still being "force fed" by the government. Its cost is far greater than anticipated. Costs of coal produced electricity, on the other hand, have gone down. And coal reserves are tremendous.

Nevertheless, the effort of the AEC to push atomic power "continues unabated," Lilienthal said. He estimated that a proposed new AEC power

program will "cost \$2 billion over a decade."

The AEC concedes that atomic power has not turned out to be cheap and easy to come by. Postwar optimism degenerated into what a few years back looked like dependency on the part of atomic industry. But recently a note of optimism has returned.

Atomic power, the AEC says, "is on the threshold" of becoming competitive with other kinds. And in the long run this new source of energy will be needed to supplement

coal, oil and water power. By 2,000 A.D., the AEC predicts, half of this country's electrical power will be generated by the atom.

The current AEC chairman, Dr. Glenn T. Seaborg, told congress recently that atomic power "has gone critical." Nuclear "furnaces" are said to have "gone critical" when the splitting atoms in their fuel achieve a self-sustaining reaction.

What Seaborg meant was that the moment is at hand when industry itself is about ready, on strictly economic

grounds, to sustain nuclear power projects from which, in competition with coal, it hopes to reap a profit.

Expense Cited

This is fine. But to Lilienthal it means merely that the atom, which he sees as just another source of energy, is on the verge of being "just as good" as what "we had before." It does not, in his mind, justify continuing huge expenditures by the Federal government. He said:

"Energy from the atom is not now needed for civilian purposes.

"At the time and place where it is needed it will be forthcoming without government prodding. If there is a real need it will be met by the utility and manufacturing industries, as it was with the automobile, the diesel engine, the telephone . . . in response to proved economic need."

"There is now no urgent fuels or power crisis and no prospect of one in the foreseeable future; when such a shortage looms, it will be taken care of by the atom if that is then the best alternative."

The Kennedy administration itself has indicated concern with the emphasis, in the Federal budget, on atomic power. Dr. Jerome B. Wiesner, the President's adviser on science and technology, reported recently that a study is now being made of energy resources "to arrive at a judgment as to the most effective allocation of our research and development efforts."

Absorbs Minds

Lilienthal said atomic energy, space and defense activities have absorbed two-thirds

of the "trained minds" available to explore "our scientific and technical frontiers."

"As a consequence," he said "all the rest of America's needs are, relatively, impoverished, neglected, and starved . . ."

"I suggest Congress consider the atomic energy program as one good place to begin to cut back sharply, to make more brains available to some of the presently starved civilian areas of science and technology."

Lilienthal appeared to feel that space exploration is get-

ting some of the "puffing" that accompanied the early buildup of atomic energy.

The space program, he said,

is the "current successor to the atomic new world."

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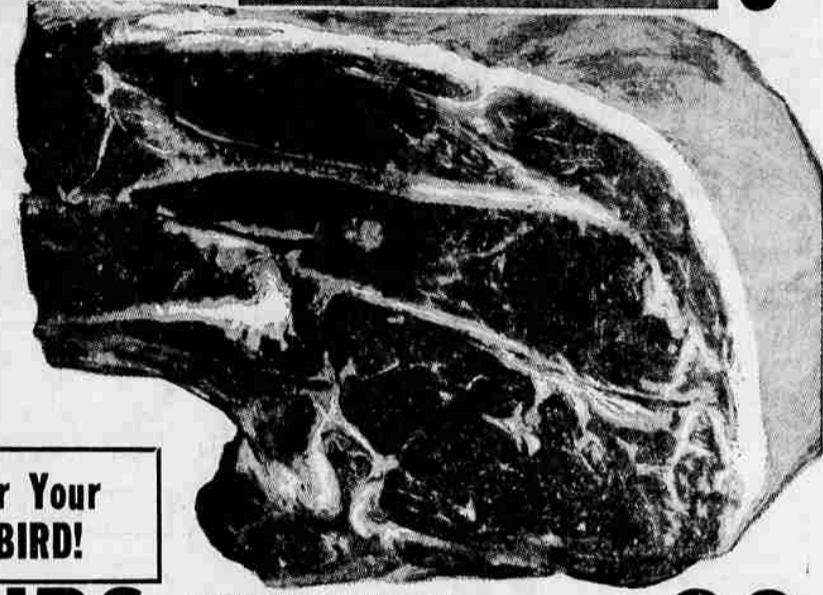
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Kennedy Bows To Unlucky No. 17

Washington —(UPI)— President Kennedy apparently has had to bow to the superstition of the Italian people.

Partly because many Italians look upon the number 17 as being just as unlucky as some Americans regard the number 13, the President is rescheduling his state visit to Rome.

The visit originally was planned to start June 17. Officials said that it would be postponed for two or three days.

While officials admitted the postponement, none was willing to be quoted by name as to the reason. But several said privately one reason was the Italian belief that it is bad luck to begin anything on the 17th day of a month.

Small Boy Unafraid, Father Is Engineer

Woburn, Mass. —(UPI) Boasting a railroad train, the Rev. H. John Muir, Baptist minister, noted a small boy sitting alone.

Taking a nearby seat, the minister asked:

"Aren't you afraid, traveling alone like this?"

"Oh, no," replied the boy, "my father is driving."

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