

Vermont Environmental Report

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GRIFFIN & SKINNER -- PART TWO: Nuclear Power: Is It Safe?

INTRODUCTION:

Over the past month and a half, since the voluntary shutdown of Vermont Yankee on January 26th, public attention in Vermont has been riveted on the question of the safety of nuclear power.

These were just some of the events that followed in almost dizzying succession.

(1) On January 26, Vermont Yankee voluntarily shut down its nuclear power plant at Vernon. The shutdown came in response to concerns about the ability of a "pressure suppression chamber" to function in the event of an accident.

(2) Three General Electric nuclear engineers, Richard Hubbard, Gregory Minor and Dale Bridenbaugh, resigned as a protest to what they asserted were the dangers of nuclear power.

(3) Robert D. Pollard, a safety engineer for the Federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission, resigned as a protest to safety problems at existing nuclear power plants.

(4) Governor Thomas P. Salmon organized a Task Force of state officials to advise him on the problems associated with the closing of Vermont Yankee.

(5) The Vermont House Government Operations Committee held hearings on a resolution to establish a special joint legislative committee to investigate the shutdown of Vermont Yankee.

(6) Vermont Health Department officials indicated that Vermont Yankee has not one, but at least six major design flaws.

(7) Governor Salmon got agreement from a national committee of governors to set up a special task force to examine the nation's commitment to the development of nuclear power.

(8) Rep. Michael Nawrath (D. Manchester) announced his intention to introduce a bill to close Vermont Yankee until safety questions have been satisfactorily answered.

(9) Rep. James Jeffords introduced legislation in the U. S. House calling for a moratorium on the further construction of nuclear power plants.

In the February issue of the VER, we presented Part One of the edited transcript of a taped discussion between James Griffin and Scott Skinner on "The Cost of Nuclear Power." Part Two is a discussion of "The Safety of Nuclear Power."

In addition to the transcript itself, Larry Keyes for Vermont Yankee, and Scott Skinner have contributed opening statements that address the events of the past six weeks.