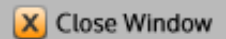




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Abstract submission for session: PA005: Countering Denial and Manufactured Doubt of 21st Century Science (details attached after the abstract)

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**CONTROL ID:** 1457420

**TITLE:** Manufactured Doubt: The Campaign Against Nuclear Energy

**ABSTRACT BODY:** Nuclear electricity is a CO2 free technology with a proven track record of large scale commercial deployment. For example, France generates 78% of its electrical power with nuclear plants. France has the lowest pre-tax cost of electricity in Europe at 4.75 eurocents per KWH and France is the world's largest exporter of electricity.

There are large world reserves of uranium sufficient for hundreds of years, even without breeder technology. Additionally, thorium, another radioactive mineral is in even more plentiful supply. Although present-day nuclear technology has proven to be safe and reliable, waiting in the wings is new generation technology that promises great improvements in both safety and cost.

Yet, there has been a calculated and sophisticated campaign in the later part of the 20th century to create doubt and fear concerning nuclear power. In the United States this campaign has essentially destroyed the nuclear industry. No new plants have been commissioned for decades. Leadership in the nuclear power field has been ceded to other countries.

The great paradox is that the very organizations that express great alarm concerning CO2 emissions are the same organizations that led the campaign against nuclear power decades ago. Representatives of these organizations will say privately that they are taking a new look at nuclear power, but no major organization has reversed course and become a supporter of nuclear power. To do so would involve a loss of face and create doubts concerning the credibility of the organization. As recently as 2001 environmentalist lobbyists made great efforts to ensure that no credit could be given for nuclear power under the Kyoto accords and the associated clean development mechanism. They succeeded and nuclear power receives unfavorable treatment under the Kyoto accords even though it is a proven solution for reducing CO2 emissions.

The technique used to destroy nuclear energy as a viable alternative in the United States had two major elements:

- 1) A campaign of legal obfuscation and legal delay to raise the costs of nuclear energy. Environmental organizations have at their disposal large legal staffs that are well equipped to launch and pursue legal assaults.
- 2) Exaggeration of the dangers of low level radiation and the dangers of storage of nuclear waste. In this they are aided by government authorities that have consistently adopted the linear, no threshold theory of radiation danger in the face of massive evidence that this approach is scientifically unsupportable.

Countering nuclear misinformation is a difficult political problem. One can hope for a breakthrough. For example if a major environmental organization reversed course and came out foursquare for nuclear power that would open up the discussion. The National Academies of Science has produced a series of influential committee reports on the Biological Effects of Ionizing Radiation, the so-called BEIR reports. These reports have consistently dismissed the extensive evidence concerning the lack of negative effects from low levels of radiation, presumably because the committee lacks the courage to follow the evidence when it leads to

politically unpalatable place. A change in attitude there could also be the start of a new era.

**CURRENT SECTION/FOCUS GROUP:** Public Affairs

**CURRENT SESSION:** PA005. Countering Denial and Manufactured Doubt of 21st Century Science

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### PA005: Countering Denial and Manufactured Doubt of 21st Century Science

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**Description:** "Skepticism is the lifeblood of science, but deliberate misinformation and denial rooted in religious or political ideologies have used techniques of skeptical inquiry to delay, derail, and foster doubt in order to sabotage the timely integration of scientific findings into society. Ideologically driven strategies attack the validity of established science, insist that acceptance of the science will harm society, and demand alternatives for the sake of fairness and balance. This session highlights contributions from interdisciplinary communities involved with research, development and deployment of strategies that counter denial and manufactured doubt about 21st century science themes such as climate change and evolution."



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