

MY TURN

A 'bright future' of nuclear power?

By SUZANNE R. CARLSON

The article in the Recorder on Jan. 7 pricked me to respond immediately. Author Joshua Goldstein spoke at the Arms Library about his scholarly research leading him to believe nuclear power to be the solution to climate change. My personal research of over 35 years has determined otherwise.

During these 75 years since the U.S. engineered and then dropped (the world's first and only) two nuclear weapons, on Hiroshima and Nagasaki (people! environment!), no scientists/engineers have found a solution for radioactive waste. Like other waste — chemicals, plastics — there is no “away.” We “discover” microplastics and endocrine-disrupters and radioactive particles have found their way through water and air and up the food-chain, affecting every living being.

You may not be seeing such reports in your newspapers/magazines or on TV or radio. But many citizens — like Deb Katz (Citizens Awareness Network) in Rowe and Tim Judson at Nuclear Information & Resource Service on nuclear issues, or Bill McKibben on earth/climate issues — have

been researching and organizing on these life-threatening situations for decades. They organize to educate and mobilize people into movements to prevent further harm and to begin to solve the problems

Because nuclear waste contains radioactive elements of known varying half-lives up to 100,000 years, the EPA set a limit to isolate radioactive waste from reaching ground water for 10,000 years, and be isolated from the environment for 100,000 years. Best guess? Scientists have not found a safe way to store them away from living beings, and are searching now for possible “deep burial” (never tried) in a “sacrifice zone” (offering deals to poor non-white communities to accept the risks of contamination.) Any “away” site requires risky transportation from all the reactor sites now “temporarily” storing high-level spent-fuel waste. Neighbors want it to go away. CAN is organizing for safest interim storage at reactor sites, and committed to finding a safe permanent solution.

We live in a culture of waste; just toss it wherever and walk away, never thinking of reduce, reuse, recycle. Food waste is

easier, as nature composts for reuse admirably! But corporate industries develop systems that produce hazardous waste, leaving cleanup to others. Creating more radioactive waste is not a solution — it's a huge toxic mess with no solution and cannot turn the tide of climate crisis.

I've been learning the value of indigenous knowledge, how to “walk in balance with all my relations” (“Walking in Balance with All My Relations” curriculum, c/o Visioning BEAR Circle Intertribal Coalition; at VisioningBEAR.org) with respect, reciprocity, humility, compassion ... and I'm grateful that I can share this with others as we transform ourselves to be part of the solution. We turn away from greed, violence and exploitation, pressure the industries and government to clean up the mess, and begin to build communities of caring, nurturing, sharing, harmony and joy. This is the real solution to climate change and social change with equity.

Suzanne R. Carlson of Greenfield is a member of boards of VB-CIC, Traprock Center for Peace and Justice, and Citizens Awareness Network.