

Policy of giveaways to companies

U.S. sells uranium plants

By LEE WEBB
Guardian Staff

WASHINGTON — Continuing a 20-year government policy of massive giveaways to big corporations, U.S. President Richard Nixon announced Nov. 10 he had ordered the Atomic Energy Commission to prepare plans to sell its three uranium enrichment plants to private industry.

Built at a cost of \$2.3-billion, these installations are the largest manufacturing complex in the world. The plants were constructed between 1943 and 1956 to produce concentrated U-235 from uranium ore. "Enriched uranium" is the only material capable of sustaining a chain reaction and thus indispensable to atomic energy for both military and civilian uses. The three plants are in Oak Ridge,

Tenn., Paducah, Ky. and Portsmouth, Ohio.

Nixon's decision is the most recent in a series of moves leading toward the systematic dismemberment of the publicly-owned and controlled atomic energy industry for the interests of the giant private corporations.

Between 1942 (when the atomic bomb project got underway) and 1960, the U.S. invested nearly \$20-billion in research, development and experimental work in nuclear technology, as well as for manufacturing and production facilities. Although much of this was for military uses, the Atomic Energy Commission spent billions on research and development (R and D) for commercial use, such as for electrical generating plants and isotopes.

From the beginning the atomic program was a government-industry partnership that - as usual - benefited business the most. The AEC hired the big corporations on cost-plus contracts (no competition) to do all the R and D and for managing productive facilities. Such industrial giants as General Electric, Du Pont, Union Carbide and Goodyear Tire and Rubber were able to get in on the ground floor of nuclear technology without risking a cent of their own money. All costs were paid for by the taxpayers.

Until 1954, these giant corporations were content to stay on the cost-plus gravy train by getting the public in effect to finance their own R and D on atomic energy.

In 1954, however, the corporations led a heavy assault on existing atomic energy legislation and were able to get congressional and presidential approval to promote and subsidize development of nuclear technology by private business.

Since the big corporations already had a head start thanks to the cost-plus contract, the industry began with an oligopolistic structure. Big corporations like GE, Du Pont and Westinghouse also were able to use all the technology financed with public funds to maximize their own growth in the atomic energy industry.

As years went by, corporations got the right to secure patents on work they did with public funds, unlimited supplies at a low price of nuclear fuel, the right to own uranium and plutonium themselves, and so on. What started as total government ownership and control of the "industry of the future" has become an industry dominated by and organized for private profit with the public paying most of the costs.

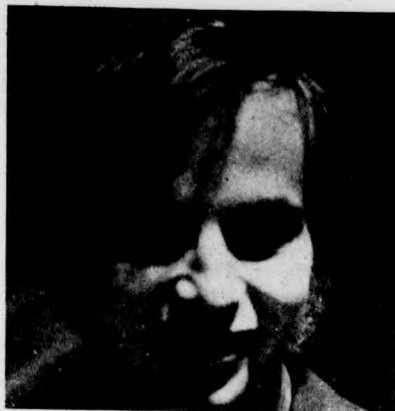
The only section of the atomic energy industry - besides basic research and military uses - that remained in public hands was the uranium enrichment plants.

Neither Democrats nor Republicans objected in principle to selling them to private industry. The only stumbling block was that no corporation or group of corporations was capable of paying anything near the \$2.3 billion that it cost the government to construct them. Furthermore, in the past the major customer of nuclear enrichment plants was the military and under those conditions the government was reluctant to allow these facilities to escape its direct control.

Campus dialogue

By TIM CLARK

Please comment on the fact that York plans a profit of \$17,000 from its food services this year.



JOHN MURPHY V II
What are they doing with the money? Perhaps they are spending it wisely. At any rate they should have better food.



ARLENE BUBIS V II
The food is rotten. The profits should go into the quality of the food!



CATHY HAMILTON V II
They should not be making a profit. I'd like better food. The money should go into better preparation so the food isn't so watered down. We want better food!



SANDI SMITH V I
The money should be used for better preparation!



SANDY SMITH V I
I don't think they should be making a profit from the students money.



RUTH PICKERSGILL V I
If they are going to be making a profit they should be using it to lower residence fees.

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