



Supporters of Nuclear Energy

Newsletter

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Bernard Ingham, Former Hon. Sec.

Let us give thanks that the “Blast from the West” is slowly evicting the “Beast from the East” from these shores. We have had a lucky escape, even though the beast has not generally been unduly beastly as British winters go.

That is why we should worry about the future. If our recent gas supply was so stretched that industry had to be paid to stop using it to keep us warm in our homes, we need to rethink our long-standing response to supposed climate change.

I have been telling Ministers this for 27 years without the sinners coming to repentance. Perhaps they will act when we recover our sovereignty from the EU next year.

In the EU we Brits are so law abiding that we are steadily de-carbonising our electricity supply while “virtuous” Germany, far from setting an example, insures against the unreliability of wind and solar power by burning more filthy brown coal.

Our politicians may well blame reduced gas supplies because of technical difficulties and the loss of North Sea storage for recent problems. But the objective of energy policy should be to provide adequate supplies at all times at the lowest possible cost.

Instead, we consumers have just paid a heavy price for the policy’s unreliability as the costs of gas and electricity have risen on top of all the subsidies we have to find for the outrageous scam lying behind renewable sources of energy.

As things stand, we are flying into a brave new “green” world on a prayer without a wing. Yet what do we find? Yorkshire’s anti-frackers are seeing off

drilling prospectors to our potential national disadvantage as well as more winter fuel risks.

Those whom the gods wish to destroy they first make mad. Their virtuous homilies on so-called global warming have done such a brilliant job on our politicians and assorted scientists and engineers that they have blinded them to the perils of de-carbonising our electricity supplies. They blithely propose to phase them out as soon as possible and even outlaw diesel and petrol-driven cars

But they never tell us where our electricity is going to come from when coal, oil and gas are barred. Instead, living in a fool's paradise, they say it will be all right on the night.

Well, I have news for them. It ain't necessarily so. Technology may come up with something, but we can't rely on it. So, with nuclear power's development at least 10 years behind schedule – and opposed at every turn by “greens” – what is there to replace fossil fuels?

I can think only of battery power since pumped storage – hydro-electric projects – is, unlike Norway, severely limited by our terrain. As it happens, a friend of mine, Brian Catt, of the Institute of Physics, has been examining batteries' potential and cost.

The result is eye-watering, even if some bright spark is lurking in the industrial undergrowth to mass produce batteries to supply the grid to cover overall the two-thirds of the time that renewables are not generating.

Therein lies a snag. It means that to keep these batteries topped up we shall need vastly more wind and solar plant. You can kiss good-bye to what is left of Britain's unspoiled land- and seascapes.

But what about the cost? Mr Catt estimates that we should need 4billion deep cycle lead acid batteries to do a proper job at a cost of £1.2trillion (thousand billion). That is getting uncomfortably close to our national debt.

The batteries would need to be replaced every four years at a cost of £300bn a time. This would raise the wholesale price of power 20-fold and cost the average consumer £3,600 on top of their current £500 average annual bill. The capital cost for pumped storage would be similar if only we could build enough.

Mr Catt is clear: subject some dramatic invention, these costs are inevitable if the government continues down the road to an entirely renewables future and could only be reduced by mass production of batteries.

Current policy therefore means that, as consumers, we face a vast and wholly

avoidable expense for no actual benefit and with serious implications for a competitive post-Brexit British economy and not least jobs.

Over to you Theresa May. Here is your chance to bring the sanity – and economy – back into energy policy that Ministers since 1990 have manifestly failed to deliver. How do you think we can make a success of Brexit if we have the costs of renewables and batteries round out necks?

OBITUARY

George Inglis CBE, FREng, BSc, C.Eng, FIMechE

Many SONE members will be saddened to learn that George Inglis has died.

George was one of the pioneers of the nuclear industry. He spent the early part of his career working for C.A. Parsons, which specialised in the manufacture of steam turbines and was one of the largest employers on Tyneside. In 1952 George was seconded by Parsons to the PIPPA design team at Harwell, beginning his distinguished career in the nuclear energy industry.

PIPPA was the forerunner of Calder Hall, the world's first nuclear power station, and George was the senior design engineer on that project. After the PIPPA experience he joined the Nuclear Power Company on its formation as Chief Engineer (Fuel). When British Nuclear Fuels (BNFL) was established in 1971 he became a Main Board Member with responsibility for the company's fuel division.

George left BNFL to become managing director of URENCO, the company formed in 1971 to exploit the centrifuge enrichment technology developed by BNFL. He retired from URENCO in 1992.

My personal recollection of George is of someone who was very direct, very professional and very determined and yet somehow laid back. His commitment to quality contributed greatly to the excellent reputation BNFL enjoyed for its fuel. I am proud to have worked both for him and with him.

Neville Chamberlain, Committee

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