

Opinions

Conservation is the key to energy debate

Saying "no" to industrial wind development on Vermont ridge lines is not the same thing as saying "yes" to nuclear power plants. Mr. Dewey is either confused or deliberately making untrue statements for his own purposes.

November 23, 2005 by Sarah Peck, Windham in The Brattleboro Reformer (VT)

As a Vermonter who is a member of the New England Coalition committed to shutting down Vermont Yankee, and also a Vermonter who is opposed to industrial wind development on our ridgelines, I was upset by Keith Dewey's letter [Reformer, Nov. 14].

Saying "no" to industrial wind development on Vermont ridge lines is not the same thing as saying "yes" to nuclear power plants. Mr. Dewey is either confused or deliberately making untrue statements for his own purposes.

Saying "no" to the industrial development of our ridgelines means using common sense. It means not rushing into a so-called "solution" without really knowing what the problem is. It means starting with the simplest, least invasive step first, then trying something else if that doesn't work. It means starting with conservation (which hasn't even been tried), instead of rushing into construction.

There is absolutely no connection between the closing of Vermont Yankee (and preventing the uprate and license extension) and the proposed 27 turbine wind development on Glebe Mountain. There is no connection between building a wind development on Glebe Mountain as symbolic gesture of opposition to global warming and the Bush administration's proposal to begin constructing new nuclear power plants in the United States. As long as people are willing to let big corporations control our country, money will be the driving force of our decision makers. We will have a largest industrial wind development in the Northeast on Glebe Mountain and the nuclear power plant in Vernon -- both by the way labeled "green" by some environmentalists.

Mr. Dewey explains very well the dangers of our country's renewed commitment to nuclear power plants, but constructing an industrial wind plant on a Vermont ridge line has significant environmental risks and hazards of its own. Erosion, 30-foot deep foundation holes blasted into the bedrock, damage to streams, destruction of birds and bats, miles of chain-link fencing, huge permanent roads in high-elevation forests and the disruption of wildlife are some of the significant impacts.

People should also realize that each monstrous turbine, as tall as a 40-story building, contains at least 13,000 gallons of mineral oil, hydraulic oil, generator fluid and anti-freeze. We all know how easy it is for accidents to happen when huge machines are at work. How will our children and grandchildren like drinking and playing in the water of a

Class A stream like Cobb Brook after a leak from a malfunctioning turbine has filled it with hydraulic fluids and antifreeze?

Mr. Dewey should also ask people to be careful what they do ask for. If something seems to good to be true, maybe it is. We should start with the least destructive, most effective solution first: conservation.

People could make a meaningful sacrifice if they replaced their light bulbs with energy efficient ones (or better yet, turned off the lights), insulated their homes carefully, switched to a car with better gas mileage, car pooled and remembered to only drive when necessary. We should also demand the progressive pricing of energy.

People who waste energy by driving gas-guzzling SUVs, build McMansion homes, and pollute the sky at night with lights should pay more for their excessive use on a sliding scale.

We must all make use of our resources wisely, including our beautiful mountains. We should all say "yes" to that.

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