

EDITOR, TIMES DISPATCH:

Regarding Alex Wilson's June editorial, "Nuclear Power is Not the Solution to Global Warming", I commend his clear and concise case against pinning our energy and climate salvation to this system. However, the all-too-common assertion that nuclear power is a "zero emissions" energy source is not only evocative of similar issues within the green development arena, but brings to the fore yet another key reason to shun it. That is, the extraction, leaching and milling of uranium entails one of the most ecologically destructive, toxic and energy-intensive processes in the entire mining industry; and more to the point, a 1998 Canadian industry study concluded that each unit of usable uranium processed yields approximately 20 units of CO2 emissions.

Of course, before considering the fuel-sourcing reality, there is the fact that the construction of power stations themselves requires massive quantities of heavily reinforced concrete (in concert with many other energy- and resource-intensive elements), the prime component of which (portland cement) accounts for at least 5% of all CO2 output worldwide in its production. It has also been reported in industry circles that, as uranium is a finite and rapidly diminishing resource, there will be a critical threshold of extraction efficiency is reached whereby fueling the average power station will yield more emissions than the facility would avoid over its entire operating life (+/- 25 years) - - and prior to even hitting this point, one also has to question the energy balance of the whole equation, particularly with regard to the fossil fuel inputs that support the entire system in the first place.

If humanity is to get real by implementing and

sustaining a true regimen for reducing the atmospheric effects (and indeed all ecological degradation) of every day activities, then our collective push for progressive or alternative "solutions" (including hybrids, EV's, solar, wind and even bio-fuels) MUST focus more honestly and intensively on the upstream side (vis a vis embodied energy in particular) of the whole life cycle, especially in the context of escalating discussion around the notion of "carbon neutrality". Otherwise, in emphasizing the operations and downstream side, we are essentially perpetuating a false sense of security based on half-truths yet will be no less responsible for ultimately foisting the full consequences upon future generations.

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