

## NUCLEAR POWER

## Uniting the anti-nuke movement

By Judy MacLean

In an effort to tie several diverse struggles together and to launch a truly mass movement against all forms of nuclear power, whether as energy or weapons, a group of anti-war activists have brought together an impressive coalition of forces in the Mobilization for Survival. The loose coalition hopes to bring together opponents of nuclear weapons, anti-nuclear power activists and community groups struggling for more money for human needs.

The campaign was kicked off in August when anti-nuclear groups staged demonstrations at 140 sites throughout the country, concentrating on nuclear power stations.

An elaborately organized set of teach-ins and community forums is also planned for October 15—November 15.

Early next year there will be a day of local actions with the slogan "Fund Our Communities." They will be aimed at persuading city governments to demand a redirecting of federal budget priorities away from nuclear arms spending and toward social services.

In May or June a demonstration will be held at the U.N. to coincide with disarmament debates there. "We want to put all governments on notice that we're tired of repeated conferences that lead only to an escalation of the arms race," says David McReynolds of the Mobilization. The organizers hope there will be similar demonstrations throughout the U.S. and the rest of the world on the same day.

The Mobilization's original organizers are veterans of the Ban the Bomb move-

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## Public questioning of nuclear power in Vermont

## The call for "public participation" is not likely to go away.

By Greg Guma

**B**URLINGTON, VT—A critical report on the operation and regulation of Vermont's only nuclear power plant has become the springboard for renewed debate over state government's role in nuclear issues. Based on an extensive study of the Vermont Yankee plant's impact on public health and its history of "abnormal occurrences," state Occupational Health Director John Froines has suggested that the state "pursue further authority to oversee activities associated with the nuclear fuel cycle including operation and construction of nuclear power plants."

Froines brought two reports to the State Health Board in August. One recommended that the state consider "challenging the federal government's exclusive authority to regulate the construction and operation of nuclear power plants," while the second opposed further consideration of Vermont as a site for nuclear waste storage or disposal. Despite criticisms by Republican Governor Richard Snelling concerning release of the studies without consulting officials from Yankee, the Health Board decided to hold a public hearing in early October to consider the recommendations.

The major study by radiologist David Scott provides technical explanations of past abnormal incidents at the plant, revealing that fuel rod and emergency core cooling system problems are only the tip of the iceberg.

Governor Snelling responded to the criticisms of nuclear plant operation by appointing a three-man Nuclear Review Committee. But his appointees have all worked within the nuclear industry and

one produced a PR brochure for Yankee.

The governor's panel, paid for its work by Vermont Yankee, will investigate management and safety at the plant while both the utilities and anti-nuclear groups prepare for an extended battle.

Anti-nuclear groups have been active in Vermont throughout the '70s. New activist alliances were also formed as an outgrowth of the Seabrook, N.H., nuclear plant site occupation. Between August 6 and 9 demonstrations involving several hundred people were held in Burlington, Rutland, Montpelier, and at the Yankee site.

Two weeks later representatives of Burlington's Red Clover Alliance and the Montpelier-based Green Mountain Alliance met with Governor Snelling to discuss his three-man review panel, safety at Yankee and the plant's six-week shutdown for refueling.

The anti-nuclear alliances want Yankee to remain closed until safety issues—at least those raised in the Scott report—are resolved. To dramatize the situation they plan a symbolic occupation at Yankee prior to its reopening in October.

Snelling defended his committee and the overall safety of Yankee from the attacks from anti-nuclear activists and the Vermont Public Interest Research Group (VPIRG), which has charged that the governor is quietly dismantling state nuclear controls.

Snelling also established new state agency procedures that give him increased control over government reports—to avoid in the future the problems posed by Scott's report.

The utilities have responded by working closely with the Governor, and orchestrating a propaganda campaign that includes a media blitz around the safety and economy of nuclear energy.

Although safety hazards are likely to remain the thrust of the anti-nuclear cri-

ticisms, especially while the Health Board is embroiled in the argument, economics will also play an increasingly important role. According to a VPIRG study, the cost of electricity from Yankee has already turned out to be four times higher than promised due to increased construction costs, decreased performance and increased fuel costs.

Vermont's state legislature already has laws on the books calling for legislative authorization of construction of plants and storage facilities. These controls do not, however, extend into operational matters. The Scott reports may lead to legal action concerning state

regulatory power over the future operation of Yankee, its storage facility, transportation of fuels and wastes, and other expansion plans now on the drawing board.

Froines called for a "mechanism for public participation" in nuclear issues just a few weeks before his exit from Vermont government to take a federal job. His recommendations, and the damaging evidence of the reports, are not likely to go away. On the contrary, they will fuel the already volatile debate over public safety and nuclear power for some time to come.

Greg Guma is a writer in Vermont.

## Vermonters prefer solar

An overwhelming majority of Vermonters recommend a "major effort to further develop solar power and other non-nuclear alternative sources of energy," according to a public opinion poll recently conducted by Rep. James Jeffords. Only July 14 Jeffords read the results of his survey of 11,000 Vermonters in Congress and noted that the findings in the area of energy "may evoke some surprise."

The biggest surprise was that 83 percent of those who responded to questionnaires favored intensified development of solar power, while only 29 percent proposed continued "major investment in development of nuclear power."

The public preference for solar over nuclear energy was complimented by a suggestion from 52 percent that coal be used "with controls to minimize strip mining and air pollution, even if these controls mean higher prices."

The survey also revealed that more Vermonters want to break up the big oil companies than want to remove

price controls as a means of increasing production—34 percent favored measures to divide the oil companies; 20 percent wanted fewer price controls.

Jeffords also asked about dependence on foreign oil, and found that strict conservation goals—and new taxes and import restrictions if goals weren't met—were the preferred solution. More than twice as many people suggested this option as those who favored higher taxes, price increases or rationing.

The poll, which also covered opinions on pay increases for members of Congress, a nationwide beverage container deposit law (93 percent want one), foreign policy and congressional priorities, was the result of a mailing to all Vermont households.

Jeffords concluded that, "the people, at least in Vermont, want us to address our energy problems in a decisive, meaningful and well considered manner. There is no cause for political timidity in doing what must be done."

—G.G.



## LABOR

# Mechanization threatens farmworkers

By Susan Stern  
Pacific News Service

SACRAMENTO, CA.—California's farmworkers, riding the crest of political success, ironically may have won themselves right out of their jobs.

Though they have triumphed in the long and often bloody battle for unionization, defeated the mighty Teamsters in contract disputes, and reaped major workers' benefits from the government, a new and more formidable opponent has entered the fray: the mechanical harvester.

California growers are discovering that the new machines not only are cheaper than the union wage demands, but also that they don't go on strike.

As the tomato harvest begins this month some 11,300 California farmworkers will be replaced by electronic tomato sorters, according to the State Assembly Office of Research.

In the next 10 years mechanical harvesters will replace 80,000 farmworkers—nearly a third of the state's current agricultural labor force—predicts United Farm Workers lobbyist Michael Linfield.

In five major California crops mechanization is already underway, eliminating jobs and drastically changing the face of farm labor from that of men in the fields to one of women on assembly lines.

In some crops, such as wine grapes and cling peaches, mechanization (where adopted) has eliminated virtually all harvest workers but the machine operators. In other crops the machines have taken over in stages. The new electronic tomato sorter is the final stage of mechanization for canning tomatoes, for instance.

## Women replacing men in jobs.

The mechanization of California agriculture began when the mechanical tomato harvester was introduced in 1964, the year cheap labor dried up with the termination of the Bracero program that allowed Mexicans to cross the border to fill out the farm labor force.

In five years the tomato harvester displaced 32,000 pickers, but created almost as many jobs for tomato sorters working on the harvesting machine. The tomato pickers had been mostly strong men paid by the piece rate. The sorters have been nearly 80 percent women, preferred for their dexterity, and paid by the hour.

Though some have blessed the tomato harvester for ending "backbreaking" labor, others say the machine has brought the worst of the factory into the fields.

"Working conditions on the machine are horrendous," says Albert Rojas of Campesinos Progresistas, a farmworker re-training organization in Yolo County, the state's leading tomato area. "You have to scream to be heard over the noise," says Rojas, "and the dust mixed with defoliant blows directly into workers' faces."

Mechanization of lettuce is to follow in short order. However, unlike tomato workers, lettuce workers are unionized and will, according to UFW contracts, be retrained and placed in other jobs by growers.

The first workers to be replaced by the lettuce harvester will be the lettuce cutters and trimmers, mostly Mexican nationals, who are now making the highest wages in the field: \$7 to \$10 an hour by the piece rate.

As in the tomato crop new assembly-line-type jobs will be created either on the machine or at the side of the field. But growers usually prefer women for these wrapping and packing jobs, and the packer's hourly wage will be far below what the cutters and trimmers are accustomed to.

There are currently no lettuce machines in the fields, but Leslie Hub-



California growers are discovering that not only are new machines cheaper than rising labor costs, they do not strike.

Bob Fitch

bard of the Western Growers Association predicts that lettuce picking will be fully mechanized within four or five years as the machines become cheaper than people.

## Union resistance.

If workers demand higher wages in the near future, they may tip the scales even further in the machine's direction, and accelerate the mechanization process. Lettuce mechanization began, Linfield points out, when growers gave the University of California \$13,500 for development of the technology after Cesar Chavez led 8,000 Salinas Valley workers out on strike in 1970.

Increasing labor costs have also pushed wine grape and canning peach growers to mechanize about 15 percent of those crops. University of California specialists predict that trend will continue, eliminating the picking jobs and causing nearly 80 percent displacement of workers wherever the machines are adopted.

The new small labor force envisioned for the 1980s would be more stable, says viticulturist Amand Kasimatis. The huge peak harvest force of today would be eliminated, leaving a small force of harvest machine operators who would be able to get fulltime employment.

Such a small, stable workforce with "heavy technological inputs," says sociologist William Freidland, "will encourage workers to join unions."

But the UFW doesn't plan to allow mechanization to winnow its workers down to "stability," even if the survivors are easier to unionize. "You don't end up with much of a union with a couple of thousand workers scattered around the state," says the UFW's Linfield. "The problem is, what becomes of the mass of workers who are displaced?"

The UFW is preparing for future job losses by continuing to organize workers and negotiate mechanization-controlling contracts. But the union's main thrust, says Linfield, will be directed toward

halting state funded mechanization research through legislation to require "social impact reports."

Though fighting mechanization is one of the UFW's main priorities, the union is just now gearing up for the battle. The state's tomato workers, meanwhile, are nearly at the end of their rope.

When the tomato harvesters roll this month, many families will be left behind in migrant camps, without food or enough money to leave. In Yolo County, officials are desperately trying to get emergency funds from the state, but they have so far been unsuccessful—no one seems to have funds for this type of disaster.

Jim Aragon, a young Arizonian who was displaced last year, recently returned to Yolo County again because the prospects for work were even drearier at home. "If I can't get work in tomatoes," he says, "I will go to the city, any city, to find a job."

Susan Stern is a Bay Area freelance journalist.

# Mobilization for survival

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ment of the '50s and early '60s, which mushroomed into the mass anti-war movement during the Vietnam era.

According to Sidney Lens, whose book *The Day Before Doomsday* provides inspiration for the Mobilization, he and David McReynolds and several other activists "decided we had to revive the old Ban the Bomb Movement, with two additions.

"First, we had to bring in the nuclear power issue because of the question of proliferation," Lens estimates that the world spread of nuclear power plants will give 40 countries access to nuclear bombs within eight years.

"Second, we had to give people some kind of hope that money saved on the arms race would go for funding human needs."

The loose coalition, with no members, only "cooperating organizations," has attracted such groups as the Clamshell Alliance, American Friends Service Committee, War Resister's League and hundreds of grassroots peace and energy groups.

Rich Pollock, director of the Nader-oriented Critical Mass Energy Project, says his group decided to get involved

because fighting nuclear power can help stop the spread of weapons. "And second, the question of how we're going to feed, house and clothe people is tied to the question of making energy affordable for people. The nuclear disarmament issue and people's needs are tied up with energy and who controls it," he says.

The Mobilization's organizers are hoping for world support. Peace groups around the world are being approached to have demonstrations to coincide with the spring U.N. action.

European socialist and communist parties generally do not support disarmament, fearing the large Soviet army near at hand. However David McReynolds believes they may support the Mobilization, which opposes nuclear weapons in the U.S., the Soviet Union, and every other power. "The Mobilization is not anti-Communist. It is independent of the U.S., the U.S.S.R., and China. We think the European parties may subscribe to our position, as the Japanese Communist party has already done," he says.

The coalition has a delicate task, keeping a number of groups with very

different priorities in cooperation. "These are groups that have never worked together. We're all unclear about how we operate. This is a testing period. But it is encouraging that people see the need to merge our resources," says Pollock.

Like many of the local cooperating groups, the Clamshell Alliance stresses that it will not submerge its priorities into the Mobilization. "While we don't discount the need for disarmament, our main concern is stopping nuclear power," says Sharon Tracy of Clamshell.

Only time will tell if the wide leeway for cooperating groups will mean the Mobilization will have the unity to become the mass movement it hopes to be.

"We're educating each other," says McReynolds. "Anti-nuclear power activists have a wide range of politics. Some are very conservative. When they work with us, they'll be forced to reappraise their conservatism. If power plants are dangerous, what about weapons? It's a creative conflict for people."

"We're still exploring ways we can work to further our common concerns. It's a question of survival. Time is running out and we can't afford the luxury of fighting among ourselves," says Norie Huddle of the Mobilization staff.

"It's a sign of the times," adds Pollock. "We're learning that many issues people thought were separate aren't so separate after all."