

THE PARLIAMENTARY AND SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

AN ASSOCIATE PARLIAMENTARY GROUP

3 Birdcage Walk Westminster London SW1H 9JJ

Telephone : 020 7222 7085 Fax: 020 7222 7189

Website: www.scienceinparliament.org.uk E-mail: lloyda@pandsctte.demon.co.uk

PRESIDENT

The Lord Soulsby of Swaffham Prior

CHAIRMAN

Dr Douglas Naysmith MP

PRESS RELEASE: 12 July 2005

A meeting of the Committee was held on Monday, 13 June 2005 at 5.30pm in the Boothroyd Room, Portcullis House

“The Nuclear Energy Option – Will we still need it – and if so - When”

The invited speakers were as follows:-

The Lord Broers, President, Royal Academy of Engineering

“The Nuclear Energy Option – Will we still need it – and if so - When”

Sir Donald Miller, Past Chairman, Scottish Power

“A Balanced Energy Policy”

Eur Ing Ann McCall, Head of Safety, Nirex

“Radioactive Waste – Is There a Solution?”

Godfrey Boyle, Director, Energy and Environment Research Unit, Open University

“Non-Nuclear Sustainable Energy Futures: What Can the UK Learn from Germany?”

Will Nuclear still be an Option if or when we realise the need to exercise it as an essential component of the plans to meet our ambitious Climate Change commitments and secure adequate and uninterrupted supplies of electrical power for the UK in the future? A satisfactory procedure for the disposal of radioactive waste is essential if progress is to be made on this front - so why is there just ‘a blank sheet of paper’ after 40 years of planning? In the meantime Renewables will have an opportunity to demonstrate their environmental credentials and fill the gap created by the demise of fossil carbon-based fuels.

Lord Broers answered with a definitive “Yes” to the key question concerning a need for the nuclear power option. There is a clear role for nuclear fission to fill the gap arising from an increased demand for power and the depletion of reserves of oil and gas from the North Sea. Climate change and carbon-trading arrangements will also increasingly place restrictions on the use of non-renewable fuels such as fossil carbon-based sources, especially coal and oil. The delivery of nuclear fusion as a primary source of power is not expected till the latter half of the century.

Sir Donald Miller laid out a checklist for early action as follows:-

1. A firm commitment from Government to the earliest construction of not less than three PWR stations. These should include a conditional decision, subject to licensing, in favour of the AP 1000 design. The advantages of concentrating our resources on a single design from the start should not be lightly thrown away.
2. Reinforce NII resources to allow an immediate start on the licensing of the AP1000.
3. Consult with the Regulator and major generators to establish satisfactory market conditions for the output of the new reactors. This is essential to secure financing on acceptable terms.
4. Reinforce those areas of R & D which cannot be funded from normal commercial recoveries. Specifically this should include building up a bank of suitable licensed sites.

Ann McCall pointed out that “Regardless of any decision on new nuclear build in the UK, radioactive waste exists now and something needs to be done for its long term management. Most other countries are planning to store such wastes in a deep geological repository --and we can demonstrate the Phased Geological Repository Concept to be a viable technical option --implementation of a technically viable option must be done through a process that takes account of social and ethical issues in an open and transparent manner.”

Godfrey Boyle claims that “a new nuclear programme for the UK is undesirable because it would starve renewables of investment and send the wrong signals to investors and to other countries --the UK Government needs to make a greater commitment to renewables and energy efficiency comparable to Germany if its ambitious and laudable CO₂ reduction targets for 2050 are to be achieved.”

Press Enquiries: Professor Peter Simpson
 Scientific Secretary, Parliamentary and Scientific Committee
 Tel: 020 7222 7085 Mobile: 07778 549 853

A full report of the meeting will be published in Science in Parliament – Summer Issue 2005