

## Big Green's War on Nuclear Energy

*The political fallout from the Fukushima disaster*

By Neil Maghami

**Summary:** In his 2006 State of the Union address President Bush called for a new era in “clean, safe nuclear energy.” Four years later President Barack Obama boasted that his Administration would provide “roughly \$8 billion in loan guarantees to break ground on the first new nuclear plant in our country in three decades...” (February 16, 2010). Unfortunately, the prospects for the nuclear industry are less bright today. An old enemy – the environmental movement—is taking advantage of the nuclear tragedy in Fukushima, Japan, and it is building a coalition linking advocates of “renewable” wind and solar power to opponents of nuclear proliferation. A surprising linchpin of the coalition: former Secretary of State George Shultz. This issue of GreenWatch looks at how the greens are developing their anti-nuclear strategy.

On March 11, 2011, a 9.0 earthquake hit Japan and triggered a tsunami that would inflict major damage on a nuclear plant at Fukushima, a jurisdiction on the island of Honshu about 150 miles from Tokyo. The plant, six reactors on an 860 acre site, was commissioned in 1971. The shutdown of its disabled reactor cooling systems prompted fears of core meltdowns and radiation leaks.



With the world's attention focused on Fukushima, many Americans are worrying about the safety of nuclear power. According to the World Nuclear Association, the US “is the world's largest producer of nuclear power, accounting for more than 30% of worldwide nuclear generation of electricity. The country's 104 nuclear reactors produced 799 billion kWh (kilowatt hours) in 2009, over 20% of total electrical output.”

It's natural for Americans to want Congress and the Department of Energy

to look more closely at how reactors are licensed, what oversight measures are in place, whether those measures need to be tightened, how nuclear waste is stored, and

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a host of other issues raised by Fukushima. And the US nuclear industry acknowledges the importance of these concerns.

On March 31, William Levis, president and chief operating officer at PSEG Power LLC, which operates three reactors in New Jersey and is part owner of two others in Pennsylvania, testified before the Senate on post-Fukushima safety improvements.

He noted that over the last 30 years, reactors in the US “have been designed to mitigate severe natural and plant-centered events similar to those experienced at the Fukushima nuclear power plant. The types of events include...a sustained loss of vital cooling water pumps, major fires and explosions that would prevent access to critical equipment, hydrogen control and venting, and loss of multiple safety systems.” “We invested approximately \$6.5 billion in 2009 at 104 operating plants -to replace steam generators, reactor vessel heads and other equipment and in other capital projects,” he added.

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## **Jihad Against Nuclear Power**

But that’s not enough for environmental extremists. Their opposition to nuclear power is essentially ideological and political. As Christopher C. Horner, senior fellow at the Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI), points out, “So many of the non-profit groups attacking nuclear energy [are] committed anti-energy ideologues.”

Anti-nuclear power environmentalists jumped on the events in Japan. On March 18, the Center for Biological Diversity, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace USA, Physicians for Social Responsibility, Public Citizen and the Sierra Club sent President Obama an open letter stating, “Just as the BP Gulf spill required your direct intervention and coordination to assure that there was not confusion in response, we look to you now for leadership in this devastating crisis.”

The reference to the BP Gulf spill is telling. Green groups are equating their attacks on nuclear power with their war on another public enemy—private oil companies. (See: “BP and the Gulf Oil Spill” by Neil Maghami, September 2010 *GreenWatch*.)

Within days of the news from Fukushima, Greenpeace USA created a webpage inviting the public to email President Obama about the danger of nuclear power :

*“I strongly urge you to cut the \$36 billion in loan guarantees to the nuclear industry from the proposed budget for next year. Now is the time to invest in technology that uses clean and unlimited energy sources*

*like the sun and wind. Not risky and dangerous nuclear power.”*

Friends of the Earth USA posted the text of another mass email that its supporters could send to members of Congress calling for “an immediate halt to reactor construction and ultimately, an end to nuclear power in the U.S.” The email continues:

*“Japan’s crisis is a heartbreaking reminder of the dangers inherent to this industry. With radioactive contaminants turning up in more places around the globe and with workers still trying to bring the reactors at Fukushima under control, more and more people in the U.S. are learning that no reactor -- new or old -- is safe. “*

Environmental groups are deploying squadrons of “experts” to denounce nuclear power, arguing that the world can easily end the use of energy based on nuclear power, oil and coal and increasingly rely on renewable sources like wind and solar. By 2050, Greenpeace USA claims, the world can get 95% of its energy from renewable sources. In a war of words, the Greenpeace USA website mocks spokesmen for the nuclear industry:

*“From the usual suspects to recent converts, you’d be forgiven for thinking that Fukushima served as a free promotional ad for the nuclear industry and not a salient warning against the world’s most expensive and dangerous method ever invented for boiling water.*

*Despite the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of people from their homes, workers with radiation lesions, bans on eating local vegetables, and warnings that Tokyo's tap water is not safe for infants, the nuclear industry is actually trying to spin the crisis as a success story for nuclear power. Many are asking us to weigh nuclear against fossil fuels, and using comparisons with the mortality rates per terawatt hour caused by coal to cast Fukushima in a more flattering light.*

*Even among environmentalists, it's not uncommon for people who are aware of the health issues, the safety problems, the terrorist risks, and the waste dilemma to see all the ills of nuclear power as a lesser evil than climate change."*

### **Pro vs. Anti Nuclear Greens**

That last paragraph above is a swipe at environmentalists who support nuclear power, arguing that it is a pollution-free way to meet the world's energy needs. It's classic Greenpeace, and it exposes one of the more interesting internal disputes within the environmental movement and on the Left generally.

There are a small number of vocal pro-nuclear environmental activists, including James Lovelock, creator of the Gaia earth theory; Stewart Brand, founder of the Whole Earth Catalog; Hugh Montefiore, former chairman of Friends of the Earth; and Dr. Patrick Moore, a co-founder of Greenpeace. Moore, who once opposed

nuclear power, co-founded in 2006 the Clean and Safe Energy Coalition, joining former New Jersey Governor and EPA Administrator Christine Todd Whitman in embracing the potential of nuclear energy. Their coalition includes labor union locals, civil rights groups such as the Tampa NAACP, Chicago Urban League and the Greater Washington Urban League, as well as nuclear scientists, energy and engineering professional organizations, electric utilities and other industry groups.

In April 2011 Moore addressed a conference of the Missouri State Chamber of Commerce and Industry. While expressing regret at events in Japan, he observed that "it's heartened a lot of us who support nuclear power that, even under the situation that exists in the world today, virtually all world leaders have reaffirmed their commitment to nuclear energy. Not only ones who have nuclear energy now, but countries that are planning to have nuclear for the first time."

Moore pointed out an important lesson from the Fukushima tragedy: the Japanese "obviously did not have sufficient back-up power ... to pump cooling water through the core of the reactor, which is still very hot because of the heat of the decay of the fission products."

But Moore's voice has been drowned out by the anti-nuclear chorus. On April 14, 2011, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) received a demand from an alliance of environmentalist groups calling on the agency to "immediately suspend all licensing and other activities at 21 proposed

nuclear reactor projects in 15 states until the NRC completes a thorough post-Fukushima reactor crisis examination comparable to the process set up in the wake of the serious, though less severe, 1979 accident at Three Mile Island."

The groups petitioning the NRC to take this action included non-profits such as Public Citizen; Nuclear Information and Resource Service; Missourians for Safe Energy; Sustainable Energy and Economic Development; the Michigan and South Carolina chapters of the Sierra Club; Southern Alliance for Clean Energy; and the National Parks Conservation Association.

It is notable that smaller state and local activist groups predominate in opposing nuclear power, along with major groups that have a grassroots base such as the Sierra Club, Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace. By contrast, some of the major foundation-funded and staff-driven Washington, DC-based environmental groups like Resources for the Future and the Natural Resources Defense Council tend to stay aloof from the emotional rhetoric used by nuclear power opponents. If they oppose nuclear power, it's because they believe its costs are prohibitive and the technology not standardized. NRDC is eager to regulate and subsidize other forms of energy to produce its preferred outcomes. But regarding nuclear power, it opposes federal subsidies and actually says, "let the marketplace work..."

How hotly NRDC will contest the President's initial FY 2011 budget request's inclusion of \$54 billion in federal loan guarantees to spur investment in new nuclear power plants remains to be seen.

### **The Real Lessons of Fukushima**

When NRDC and other environmentalist groups rush to promote what they believe to be the "lessons" of Fukushima, for Christopher C. Horner of the free-market Competitive Enterprise Institute, the events at Fukushima point to lessons very different from the ones gleaned by Big Green:

"First of all, the US ought to immediately reverse the Obama administration's call to cancel Yucca Mountain Nuclear Waste Repository. The Fukushima reactor's spent material was, like our own, stored on-site – and this was the source of the bulk of the threats arising post-tsunami. Funding for the Yucca repository, located in Nevada, was ended with the April 2011 federal budget passed by Congress, unfortunately." (For more see Tom Csabafi, "Greens Against Nuclear Energy: Fighting the Nuclear Renaissance," in CRC's Organization Trends, May 2008.)

"The other lesson to be drawn concerns the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) war against coal. The development of dozens of coal plants simply to replace existing capacity has been stalled by the EPA, and many plants are expected to begin closing as early as 2015. This war on coal has been carried out with the assumption, built into the EPA's rigged

economic models, that nearly 100 new nuclear reactors would be brought online, in lieu of new coal and of replacing coal plants which will be retired. Without coal or these reactors, there is a gaping hole as to where we get our electricity." (See Horner's *Green Watch* article, "The Sierra Club's War on Coal: Green Groups Target Coal-Fired Power Plant," Nov. 2010.)

Horner is the author of *Red Hot Lies: How Global Warming Alarmists Use Threats, Fraud and Deception to Keep You Misinformed* (Regnery, 2008). His conclusion: "As a practical matter, the events in Fukushima surely mean that those 100 new reactors are not in the cards, as if they ever were anything but fantasy."

### **George Shultz and the Greens: Odd Couple?**

A March 25, 2011 Los Angeles Times story reported on "the successful alliance between clean-tech businesses and environmental groups that defeated Proposition 23 last November." Prop 23 was a ballot initiative that would have temporarily suspended implementation of a stringent new California law regulating carbon emissions. The Times story said a new group called 'Californians for Clean Energy and Jobs' would now work to generate public support for the state's tough new regulations issued under its own global warming law. Many consider the California law more demanding than the cap-and-trade bill defeated last year in the U.S. Senate.

Among the group's leaders: former Secretary of State George Shultz (who told the Silicon Valley Mercury News in March that he has solar panels on his house); billionaire Democratic Party donor and San Francisco hedge fund manager Thomas Steyer; and California's environmental establishment, including the California League of Conservation Voters and the Natural Resources Defense Council.

The *Times* story explains why the new organization is so important:

"And, with *opposition growing to the renewal of California's nuclear plant licenses*, and gas prices surging higher, the group will seek to shore up Gov. Jerry Brown's plan to *vastly expand the state's reliance on solar and wind power.*" [italics added] Search the website of Californians for Clean Energy and Jobs ([www.cabrightspot.com/](http://www.cabrightspot.com/)) and you will find hundreds of references to wind power and solar power – but just one reference to nuclear power.

Shultz is not among the many Californians who fear jobs will be destroyed by the "clean energy" standards mandated by the new global warming law. Instead, he thinks the law will create jobs. Shultz played an energetic role in the campaign against Proposition 23, thundering, "Jobs in California generated by clean-tech ventures are growing and, since these products have global potential use, the prospect for important growth in clean-tech jobs is promising. As a former Secretary of State, I see our dependence on foreign oil as one

of the greatest threats to national security, and the proposition would undermine efforts to break that dependence” (June 22, 2010).

The *Times* reported that “the new organization has \$1 million in the bank, left over from the initiative campaign, and is planning to raise more.” Additional funding will no doubt come from donors to the environmentalist groups that backed the successful effort to defeat Prop. 23, including Ceres, Defenders of Wildlife, Environmental Defense Fund, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace USA, National Audubon Society, National Wildlife Federation, Natural Resources Defense Council, Pew Environment Group, Sierra Club, Wilderness Society, and the Union of Concerned Scientists.

“I hate to say we’re getting the band back together, but we’re getting the band back together,” Thomas Steyer told the *New York Times*.

George Shultz’s role in stirring up what amounts to anti-nuclear ferment is difficult to explain. After all, Shultz spent much of his private sector career as an executive with Bechtel, the multinational construction firm that built about half the 104 nuclear power plants operating in the United States!

Shultz amicably retired from the Bechtel’s board only in 2009. The corporation summarized his contributions: “As president (1975 to 1982), director, and senior counselor at Bechtel, [Shultz]

shared his wisdom, dedication, energy, and intelligence for more than a quarter of a century.”

What’s easier to explain is the attitude of the radical activists toward Shultz. Those who might once have linked him to profiteering from the war machine now handle him with kid gloves. For example, a June 2003 report by the Naderite group Public Citizen entitled “Bechtel: Profiting from Destruction” accused Shultz of having used “political connections to lobby on behalf of a military invasion of Iraq.” But now that Shultz is an asset in the greens’ war on nuclear power, all is forgiven and forgotten.

### **Does Nuclear Power Lead to Nuclear Proliferation?**

George Shultz has repeatedly expressed his concern that byproducts of nuclear power like plutonium can be used to create nuclear weapons. At an October 2008 conference at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Shultz worried about using nuclear power to meet U.S. energy needs, and in an interview earlier in the year he cautioned against the spread of nuclear power:

*“The [Persian] Gulf states all want nuclear power plants, and if you enrich your own uranium—as the Iranians aspire to do—you can enrich it for a weapon. When the fuel is spent, it can be reprocessed into plutonium. If nuclear power spreads—as the people who are worried about global warming are pushing for—then the problem of the nuclear fuel cycle emerges. All of*

*these things together give you that uneasy feeling.”* (YES! Magazine, May 2008.)

Shultz and his environmentalist allies speak as if handling byproducts of the nuclear fuel cycle poses an insoluble political problem.

But does it? In a 2006 radio address President George W. Bush observed that the US can “work with [its allies to] develop and deploy innovative, advanced reactors and new methods to recycle spent nuclear fuel. This will allow us to produce more energy while dramatically reducing the amount of nuclear waste and eliminating the nuclear byproducts that unstable regimes or terrorists could use to make weapons.”

The initiative Bush advanced became known as the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership, or GNEP. Environmental and “peace” groups quickly called on Congress to deny funding to GNEP. Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, the Federation of American Scientists, Public Citizen, Natural Resources Defense Council, the Union of Concerned Scientists and Physicians for Social Responsibility repeated Shultz’s argument that a rogue state or terrorist group could make nuclear weapons if it were able to reprocess spent fuel from nuclear power reactors. The Bush initiative, they said, was based on false assumptions and would make nuclear proliferation easier not harder

The nonprofits’ campaign has succeeded in weakening congressional support for GNEP, which under the Obama

Administration has been rebranded as the “International Framework for Nuclear Energy Cooperation” (IFNEC).

### What’s Next?

What’s the next battlefield in the green campaign against nuclear energy? Green groups may decide to attack so-called small modular reactors that the Obama administration is promoting. The administration argues that these reactors can be built to better withstand cataclysmic events like earthquakes.

In his February 16, 2010 energy speech, President Obama appeared to scold environmentalist critics of his position on nuclear power:

*“...[W]e can’t keep on being mired in the same old stale debates between the left and the right, between environmentalists and entrepreneurs. Whether it’s nuclear energy, or solar or wind energy, if we fail*

*to invest in the technologies of tomorrow, then we’re going to be importing those technologies instead of exporting them. We will fall behind. Jobs will be produced overseas instead of here in the United States of America. And that’s not a future that I accept...”*

The environmentalists are not cowed by Obama. “We were hopeful last year; he was saying all the right things,” Friends of the Earth president Erich Pica told the New York Times. “But now he has become a full-blown nuclear power proponent, a startling change over the last few months.”

On March 22, 2011 *Bloomberg Markets Magazine* notes that the Obama Administration isn’t backing away from its support for nuclear power. Bloomberg reports that Obama Energy Secretary Steven Chu, “has requested \$97 million for small-reactor development in fiscal 2012, which begins on Oct. 1. Chu said on March 16 that President Barack Obama’s

administration will press ahead with efforts to expand loan guarantees for new reactors.”

If green non-profits increase the pressure on the President to back away from nuclear power programs, will Obama push back? Or will he cave?

Much is riding on the answer to these questions. Eventually we will learn whether the U.S. harnesses nuclear power to achieve real energy independence, or whether it is shackled to the environmentalist movement’s fear of technology.

### GW

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## Earth Day a Celebration of Power & Bureaucracy

By Matt Patterson

**E**nvironmentalism is often compared with a religion, and for good reason: Like those in the throes of religious zeal, environmentalists often cling to extreme beliefs even (or especially) in the face of damning contrary evidence. Environmentalism also fosters a sense of moral superiority in its adherents sufficient to justify the demonization and

marginalization of those holding heretical views. Never has the comparison been more apt than this year, however, when Earth Day fell on Good Friday.

But there is one area where the analogy breaks down: In our culture, religion and state are separate, a demarcation jealously guarded by liberals. Ironic, then, that those

same liberals cherish and champion state involvement in their cult of Gaea.

Thanks largely to agitation by the global green lobby, “renewable” energy received government subsidies to the tune of \$57 billion worldwide in 2009, according to International Energy Agency Chief Economist Fatih Birol.

Why? “In the absence of government support, many renewable energy technologies will struggle to survive,” Birol explains. The converse, of course, is also true -- without fantastical environmental schemes to provide both revenue and justification for bureaucratic control over large swaths of society, Big Government would struggle to survive.

So vast sums of tax dollars are collected and then flushed down the “green” toilet. Funds many a family might use to buy groceries or go on vacation are instead funneled to support green energy projects that have zero chance of providing even a significant fraction of the energy the dynamic U.S. economy requires.

In 2007 alone, taxpayers subsidized solar energy at \$24.34 per megawatt-hour and wind at \$23.37 per megawatt-hour, according to the Energy Information Agency. And what did we get for those expenditures?

Not much, save to pay the salaries of God knows how many Washington busybodies and their corporate cronies. There’s a reason, after all, that renewable energies need to be propped up by government -- they are unreliable and atrociously expensive.

This cold reality will not deter California, ever the vanguard of fiscal folly: On April 12, Democratic Gov. Jerry Brown got a

jump on Earth Day celebrations when he signed into law a mandate that the Golden State generate one-third of its energy via renewable sources by 2020.

That this will increase electricity costs for California’s already beleaguered businesses (which already pay up to 50 percent more for electricity than the rest of the country) did nothing to sway lawmakers, so intent are they on committing the state to economic suicide.

The very idea of Earth Day encourages such madness, leading politicians to fall over themselves to outgreen one another. But from the beginning, the environmental movement was a much “red” as green.

Earth Day founder Sen. Gaylord Nelson reflected on the origins of the movement in the radical left ferment of the 1960s:

“At the time [1969], anti-Vietnam War demonstrations, called ‘teach-ins,’ had spread to college campuses all across the nation. Suddenly, the idea occurred to me -- why not organize a huge grassroots protest over what was happening to our environment?”

“I was satisfied that if we could tap into the environmental concerns of the general public and infuse the student anti-war energy ... we could generate a demonstration that would force this issue onto the political agenda.”

April 22 was chosen as the date for the first Earth Day in 1970, and for every Earth Day thereafter. This year it fell on Good Friday, a coincidence befitting the status of environmentalism as a secular religion.

But every year Earth Day falls on the birthday of Vladimir Lenin, the man who ushered communism from Marxist theory to Soviet tyranny, a noncoincidence befitting environmentalism’s status as a frequent enemy of economic liberty.

*(This article originally appeared in The Washington Examiner, April 20th, 2011.)*

## **GW**

*Matt Patterson is senior editor at the Capital Research Center and a contributor to “Proud to Be Right: Voices of the Next Conservative Generation” (HarperCollins, 2010.)*

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**Many thanks,**

**Terrence Scanlon  
President**

# GreenNotes

**Michael Brune**, executive director of the **Sierra Club**, has shamefully blogged for the *SFGate.com* about his organization's desire to block economic growth for a very poor people. His family, Brune bragged, recently "... went on a short vacation to Puerto Rico, which is home to the Sierra Club's newest chapter. Its passionate volunteers were galvanized by the need to protect some of the island's last unspoiled coastland from being developed for condos, luxury resorts, and golf courses. It's called the Northeast Ecological Corridor and its beaches include important nesting sites for endangered leatherback sea turtles." That the aforementioned resorts would allow people to enjoy Puerto Rico's beautiful coast, provide countless jobs for locals, and increase the tourist dollars upon which the Puerto Rican economy depends apparently means nothing to Brune compared to the needs of a turtle. Only a wealthy, white Western environmentalist could champion the poverty of poor people, and feel smugly moral while doing so.

On May 4th a group of plaintiffs, including five teenagers, filed suit in federal court claiming that "the federal government has violated its legal obligation to protect the atmosphere as a resource that belongs to everyone," according to *Live Science*. Yes, kids are suing the government for failing to prevent global warming, egged on by a non-profit advocacy group called **Our Children's Trust**. The suit is based on the so-called Public Trust Doctrine: "So far politics have governed what governments are doing about the climate crisis, and the Public Trust Doctrine is about putting the science back into climate protection," explained **Julia Olson**, director of Our Children's Trust. Exploiting children in the name of flawed, ideologically tainted science is of course nothing new to environmentalists. But it's still creepy.

The **Pennsylvania Environmental Council** and the **Chesapeake Bay Foundation** are pushing for amendments to the 1874 **Pennsylvania Oil and Gas Act**, aimed primarily at tightening environmental controls over the **Marcellus Shale** development project. "The regulations and oversight governing this industry have not kept up with the technology for extraction," claimed **Matt Ehrhart**, executive director for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's Pennsylvania office. "Updating Pennsylvania's Oil and Gas Act is a critical step in enabling the commonwealth to manage Marcellus extraction in a fashion that protects our natural resources and our communities." As well, no doubt, as protecting the paychecks of the busybodies who staff the Keystone State's environmental organizations.

**Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** Assistant Administrator **Mathy Stanislaus** during recent testimony before the **House Energy and Commerce Committee** was asked whether the EPA has taken into account the possible job losses that would ensue as a result of the agency's new regulations on coal ash. "Not directly, no," answered Stanislaus. With the unemployment rate now at 9 percent, would it be too much to ask that every government agency take into account the possible job losses that may result from their edicts? Apparently so.

Alas, the jobs fallout from EPA regulations in fact may be exceeded only by their effect on energy availability. From *Reuters*: "The electric grid agency for the state of Texas said on Wednesday that stricter federal air, water and coal regulations could force the retirement of more than 8,000 megawatts of natural gas-fired power generation in the state, making it difficult to meet electric demand in 2015." A poorer, darker world – literally. Such are the fruits of the Environmental Protection Agency, should they be allowed to come to harvest.