

RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT

Nuclear Sales and Nonproliferation

Recent controversial decisions by West Germany and France to sell nuclear fuel facilities to Brazil and Pakistan may mark the collapse of American hopes for halting nuclear weapons proliferation. Why? The plants and technology required to enrich uranium and reprocess plutonium for use as fuel in nuclear power plants can also produce material for atomic bombs.

Writing in *Foreign Affairs*, Senator Abraham A. Ribicoff urges the United States to persuade other nuclear exporters to control future uranium enrichment and plutonium reprocessing facilities. Instead of exporting such potentially dangerous plants, these countries should be asked to share new multinational facilities in the United States and Europe, which would provide complete nuclear fuel service to their reactor customers on a cheap, reliable basis. As an inducement to give up their lucrative sales of enriching and reprocessing equipment, the Europeans and Canadians should be offered a larger share of power reactor sales, now dominated by the United States. And, Ribicoff writes, the United States should be prepared to suspend all sales of enriched uranium fuel to those exporter nations that refuse to join in meaningful nonproliferation plans.

But Paul L. Jaskow, an MIT economist, argues that the threat of a unilateral U.S. embargo on exports of enriched nuclear fuel to Europe no longer means much. The United States now enjoys a commanding lead in fuel enrichment facilities; but two West European consortiums will have enrichment plants in operation in the next two to six years.

To curb the spread of nuclear weapons, says Jaskow, the United States must first understand "the realities of the international nuclear energy industry as it exists today and as it is evolving." The United States should insist that importing countries in the Third World sign safeguards agreements and submit to international inspection. But Washington should recognize that the U.N.'s International Atomic Energy Agency by itself is presently incapable of an effective watchdog role and has no real enforcement powers.

"A Market-Sharing Approach to the World Nuclear Sales Problem" by Abraham A. Ribicoff, and "The International Nuclear Industry Today" by Paul L. Jaskow, both in *Foreign Affairs* (July 1976), 428 E. Preston St., Baltimore, Md. 21202.