

A Return to Common Sense



By Harry J. Farrell

Recently the staff of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation issued a ruling that was guided by ideology, misinformed public opinion and zeal rather than common sense. It recommended that power facilities such as Indian Point spend billions of dollars to retrofit their plants with unproven technology with the goal of protecting fish eggs and larvae in the Hudson River.

These rules, if implemented, substitute the radical for the reasonable, resulting in soaring energy costs, the closing of Indian Point and other such facilities around the state, and economic ruin for New York families, workers and businesses.

Make no mistake, DEC staff has attacked with a hatchet a problem that can be solved with current, viable and less expensive fixes. These fixes will protect the fish and the water quality of the Hudson River and keep Indian Point online. Remember, Indian Point provides nearly 30% of the New York metropolitan area's energy needs. And that drives the economy of New York.

Driven by the urgings of environmental zealots and anti-nuclear ideologues, more than half of the state's generating power would be affected by this staff-issued proposal, with thousands of jobs at risk. Billions of dollars of economic activity could evaporate if these staff recommendations are put into practice. The onerous financial burdens created by these ill-considered rules would force power plant operators to cease operations. The State's aging power grid would be destabilized to a point of no return. Thousands of good paying jobs for my union brothers and sisters would disappear with nothing to follow them.

Recently, the New York Independent System Operator estimated that as the state emerges from the current recession, power demand will increase. This is no time for state leaders to jeopardize the reliability of our energy infrastructure while at the same time delivering a body blow to our economic recovery.

Everyone agrees that regulation is necessary to secure a clean, sustainable environment for today and for the future. But there are better, more effective solutions than the draconian measures contemplated by Albany bureaucrats. Consider, for example, using existing wedgewire screening technology at Indian Point. This goes a long way to addressing the goals of environmentalists, business executives, labor leaders and working families.

Let's put aside a drastic ideological agenda and work instead in collaboration with ratepayers, business, and labor leaders to secure a sane, affordable and clean future for all New Yorkers. It's just common sense.

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