

Why?

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And so we are still left with the question: Why?

The thousands who rail against nuclear power, against the utilities, the corporations, the capitalist system and the profit motive have not been hurt personally by any of these; on the contrary, they have been the beneficiaries of the system they profess to despise....

The hundreds of thousands in the radicalized sections of the American upper middle class may very well kid themselves that their opposition to nuclear power is based solely on safety and environmental considerations, and such high-minded rationalization makes it easy for this belief to become "sincere;" but objectively, this rationalization is pure nonsense, since nuclear power is demonstrably safer and environmentally sounder than any of its alternatives. Their convictions would soon be shattered if they were willing to look at the facts. But their convictions are para-religious, and they are willing to look at the "facts" only if supplied by the priests of the People's Lobby or the Friends of the Earth. There must be a strong motivation behind such irrationality, and it does not at all follow that the motivation is known to its victims.

But when it comes to motivation, look for the Number One motive of human action: self-interest.

What possible self-interest could there be in opposing the cleanest, safest and cheapest kind of electric power? What possible self-interest could there be in opposing economic growth in general?

Plenty. Perhaps the clearest indication is given by the population controllers, who as often as not are part of the radicalized, environmentalist, elitist, anti-capitalist, "America stinks" syndrome. Their beliefs are no less irrational than those of the nuclear foes. The Zero Population Growth movement emerged strongly in the late sixties, when the US birth rate had long been in an unprecedented rapid decline; their activity continued unabated when that decline took the fertility rate below the natural replacement level in 1973; and still it continues today when it is falling toward the point where not even immigration will make up for the eventual decline of the population (unless the 18-year-old trend reverses). Concern about the population explosion in the Third World is but a red herring. Paul Ehrlich, the guru of the population controllers, may rave and rant about India, Bangladesh and South America; but when it comes to the punchline, he calls on the