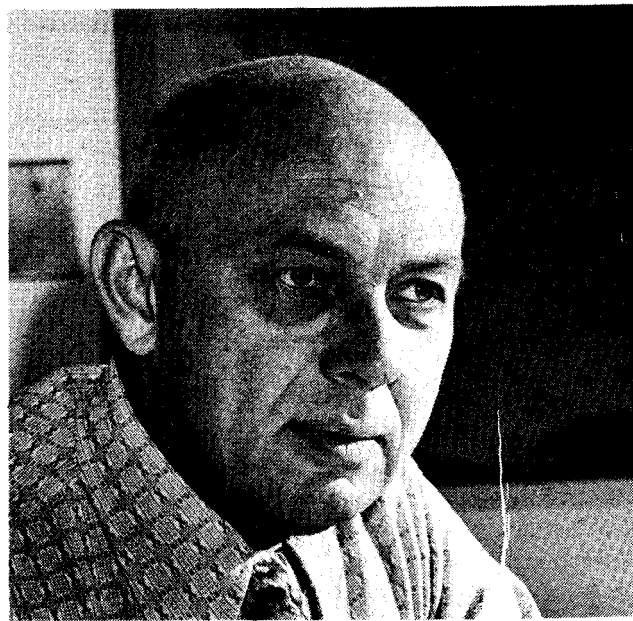


DOE's fusion chief resigns in protest

by Marsha Freeman



Edwin Kintner

On Nov. 24, Edwin Kintner, the Associate Director of the Office of Energy Research and head of the U.S. magnetic fusion program, announced to his staff in Washington that he had resigned from his position at the Department of Energy. Kintner cited the attempt by the Office of Management and Budget to usurp policy-making power for the fusion program from the scientists at the DOE, and instead apply their "budget cutting" methods to the nation's most critical science and technology program.

In a statement to *Fusion* magazine, Kintner said: "It is now sufficiently clear that the intent of the DOE Buchsbaum fusion review panel and of the Magnetic Fusion Energy Engineering Act of 1980 will not be carried out." As the head of the Department of Energy fusion effort, and from many years of experience as a veteran of the nuclear Navy, Kintner was solidly behind the recommendations by the Buchsbaum panel and the Fusion Act to begin an aggressive engineering effort in fusion.

Kintner has led the U.S. fusion effort for the past six years, since the formation of the Department of Energy, and weathered the vagaries of the Carter Administration attempts to keep fusion as a mere research project. Kintner played a key role in the reviews of the fusion program over 1979 and 1980, and drew on his experience in helping build the U.S. Navy's first nuclear-powered submarine to reinforce the idea that if the nation set its mind to it, the United States could have commercial fusion by the year 2000.

Kintner said upon his resignation that the current power play between the OMB, DOE, and the Office of the Science Adviser "leaves the program with no strateg-

ic backbone or timetable." Not only is the OMB setting the absolute funding limit for fusion for fiscal 1983, they are attempting to tell the fusion office how it can or cannot spend the insufficient money it would have left.

A second scientist involved in the fusion program stated that Kintner had no indication that he would get any support from higher echelons in the Department of Energy in fighting for the fusion budget this year. Neither the Secretary, James Edwards, nor the Deputy Secretary, Ken Davis, has been committed to making sure the U.S. maintains its current international lead in magnetic fusion.

Instead, what has predominated is a short-sighted policy of pushing forward the nuclear fast breeder while succumbing to the line that if fusion were to be ready for commercial development sooner, rather than in 50 years, that would interfere with the breeder effort. In reality, without advanced nuclear and fusion research and engineering pushing ahead, the breeder and conventional nuclear technology are a dead end.

Kintner is planning to remain at the DOE until Jan. 10, then play an active role as a public spokesman for the fusion effort. He plans to be available to testify in Washington during the public hearings on the FY83 budget, and will, no doubt, find his advice welcomed.

The DOE has stated that as of Nov. 30 the acting director of the fusion program will be Dr. Jim Kane, a high-energy physics scientist. It is not clear whether leadership for the program will continue to be vested in someone with science or engineering expertise and experience, or whether, given the effort to emasculate the fusion program and the expected dissolution of the DOE, a "caretaker" director will be appointed.