

Reuther's 'Atoms for Peace'

From Reuther's "A separate opinion to the Joint Congressional Committee on Atomic Energy, submitted as a member of the Panel on the Peaceful Use of Atomic Energy"—Jan. 25, 1956.

In the cold war—in freedom's struggle against the forces of Communist tyranny—in the struggle for the hearts and minds of men—speed, all speed, in harnessing the atom to man's peaceful needs, can be decisive.

Access to low-cost nuclear power may prove the key to the economic development of backward areas, and make possible the liberation of millions of people from poverty, hunger, ignorance, and disease. America's leadership is essential if we are to block the Communists in their efforts to forge poverty into power.

Our success in harnessing the atom to lift the burden of poverty and disease from hundreds of millions of the world's people living in hunger and ill-health, would establish America in a position of moral leadership against which Communist propaganda would be impotent.

Harnessing of the atom for peaceful purposes will give the tools with which to wage freedom's most powerful propaganda to these people—the propaganda of the democratic deed. Failure on the part of America to pursue the peaceful harnessing of the atom with maximum speed, determination, and dedication, may prove to be the Achilles Heel of the cold war.

Build Nuclear Plants at Home

We shall not give leadership to other people if we refuse to exercise it on our own behalf. The fact is that the United States is failing to demonstrate the outstanding leadership in releasing atomic energy for peaceful purposes, which it demonstrated in putting the atom to work for war.

We are not working with speed and determination to convert atomic energy into an instrument of peaceful progress. Our program for developing atomic energy as a

source of electric power is moving too slowly.

For many years after the war, no really significant beginning was made to apply the atom to peaceful uses. Finally, one year ago, the AEC [U.S. Atomic Energy Commission] invited private enterprise to submit proposals for participating in the development of atomic reactors for the development of electric power. But no private power reactors are now under construction, and none has completed the initial stages of design.

The one large-scale reactor now building is the AEC demonstration reactor in Shippingport, Pennsylvania. Apart from this government project, the sobering fact is that, today, ten and a half years after the end of the war, America's peacetime atomic program has not advanced beyond the drawing boards. The head of the AEC reactor division states that as of today, there is no certainty when, if ever, private industry will build and operate a power reactor. . . .

The need to develop atomic energy as a practical source of power for use in the United States, is urgent. There are power-hungry areas in our country today. There are other areas where the high cost of power retards economic progress and is encouraging the flight of industry to other parts of the country.

Total power requirements in the United States will expand at a tremendous rate over the next twenty-five years. We shall need nuclear power to meet those requirements. I cannot accept the comfortable assurance that our conventional fuel resources will meet all our power needs for the next twenty to twenty-five years. Nor will I rely on the Federal Power Commission's consistently conservative forecasts of power requirements as reflecting the true growth potential of our economy or the increasing needs of the American people.

No power ceiling should be imposed upon the normal and necessary expansion of our economy. Of that, we must make sure. We must develop every source of energy we have, including atomic energy. . . .

A fivefold increase in power supply in twenty-five years, presents a tremendous challenge. We should enthusiastically welcome the opportunity which the advent of nuclear power gives us, to meet that challenge.