

European Communities

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EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

# Working Documents

1980 - 1981

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12 December 1980

DOCUMENT 1-647/80

## Report

drawn up on behalf of the Committee on Energy and Research

on the ~~Geneva~~ Appeal and the suspension of work on breeder reactors

**Rapporteur: Mr M.R. SELIGMAN**



On 17 October 1979 Mr CAPANNA, Mrs BONINO, Mr PANNELLA and Mr COPPIETERS tabled a motion for a resolution (Doc. 1-394/79) pursuant to rule 25 of the Rules of Procedure on the Geneva Appeal and the suspension of work on breeder reactors.

On 22 October 1979 the European Parliament referred this motion for a resolution to the Committee on Energy and Research as the Committee responsible, and to the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection for its opinion.

On 21 November 1979 the Committee on Energy and Research appointed Mr Seligman rapporteur.

It considered this report at its meetings of 21 April 1980, 27 May 1980 and 25 November 1980. At its meeting of 25 November 1980 the Committee adopted the motion for a resolution and explanatory statement by 13 votes to 8.

Present: Mrs Walz, chairman; Mr Gallagher and Mr Normanton, vice-chairmen; Mr Seligman, rapporteur; Mr Adam, Mr Beazley, Mr Calvez (deputizing for Mr Galland), Mr Capanna, Mr Coppieters (deputizing for Mrs Bonino), Mr Fuchs, Mr Herman (deputizing for Mr Croux), Mr Kellett-Bowman (deputizing for Mr Moreland), Mrs Lizin, Mr Petersen, Mr Price, Mr Purvis, Mr Rogers (deputizing for Mr Linkohn), Mr Sassano, Mr Turcat, Mr Veronesi and Mrs Viehoff (deputizing for Mr Percheron).

The opinion of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection is attached.

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The Committee on Energy and Research hereby submits to the European Parliament the following motion for a resolution, together with explanatory statement:

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

on the Geneva Appeal and the suspension of work on breeder reactors

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the motion for a resolution pursuant to Rule 25 of the Rules of Procedure (Doc. 1-394/79),
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Energy and Research and the opinion of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection (Doc. 1-647/80),
  - having regard to its previous resolutions and in particular its resolutions on
    - the communication from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council (Doc. 251/77) on the fast breeder option in the Community context, - justification, achievements, problems and action perspectives<sup>1</sup>;
    - the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council (Doc. 355/78) for a decision adopting a research programme for the European Atomic Energy Community on codes and standards for fast breeder reactors (structural integrity of components)<sup>2</sup>;
    - the operation of the Euratom inspectorate with particular reference to the allocation of duties between the Commission of the European Communities, the governments of the Member States and the International Atomic Energy Agency in respect of the inspection of fissile materials in the EAEC<sup>3</sup>;
1. Points out that hearings on breeder reactors have already been organised by other bodies, notably by the Council of Europe on 18-19 December 1979, and thus feels that the holding of a further hearing on breeder reactors would constitute a costly duplication of effort;

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<sup>1</sup>OJ No. C63 of 13.3.1978, page 45

<sup>2</sup>OJ No. C6 of 8.1.1979, page 18

<sup>3</sup>OJ No. C127 of 21.5.1979, page 44

2. Notes that the Community budget does not at present contribute to any fast breeder construction programme, though one such programme has received Euratom and European Investment Bank loans;
3. Believes that it would not be appropriate for the European Parliament to call on the governments concerned to suspend all work connected with breeder reactor projects;
4. Rejects, consequently, the motion for a resolution on the Geneva Appeal and the suspension of work on breeder reactors.
5. Instructs its President to forward this resolution and the report of its committee to the Council and Commission of the European Communities and to the Organising Committee, Geneva Appeal Association.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENTI. Introduction

1. The motion for a resolution, the text of which is annexed to this draft report, consists of three paragraphs and, in annex, the text of the Geneva Appeal.

2. The European Parliament has already considered the fast breeder option in the report drawn up by Mr Noé (Doc. 519/77) which was adopted by the European Parliament on 17 February 1978<sup>1</sup>. On that occasion the European Parliament came out in favour of fast breeder reactors.

3. It should be noted that fast breeder reactors have the advantage of using nuclear fuels approximately 60 times more efficiently than light-water reactors. They have the characteristic, however, in normal operation, of producing more plutonium than they burn, though the rate of plutonium burn up can be modified.

II. Consideration of the paragraphs of the motion for a resolution contained in Doc. 1-394/79

4. Paragraph 1 of the motion for a resolution requests the Committee on Energy and Research to hold hearings on the question of breeder reactors (and in particular on the projects on hand at Malville and Kalkar) and to report to Parliament as soon as possible on their implications in all areas (especially as regards the safety of the population, relations with non-Member countries and economic aspects).

5. The Council of Europe held a hearing on the economic aspects and safety of fast breeder reactors on 18 and 19 December 1979 in Brussels. This hearing included a session on the economic interest of fast breeders and a session on safety problems, incorporating a study of safety under normal operating conditions and a study of accidents considered under the following headings :-

- (i) possible types of accidents
- (ii) prevention
- (iii) limitation of consequences
- (iv) evaluation of risks.

6. Another session of this hearing dealt with the impact of fast breeders on the environment. A record of the proceedings of this hearing, at which both proponents and opponents of FBRs took part, has been published.

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<sup>1</sup>OJ No. C63 of 13.3.1978, page 45

7. In view of the recent hearing organised by the Council of Europe, it would appear to be a duplication of effort, as well as being costly, for the European Parliament to hold a hearing on fast breeder reactors. This is particularly true as two of the three areas referred to in paragraph 1 of the motion for a resolution (safety of the population and economic aspects) have been specifically dealt with in the Council of Europe's hearing. The third point raised by the authors of this resolution, i.e. relations with non-Member countries, does not really fall within the competence of the Committee on Energy and Research.

8. Paragraph 2 of the motion for a resolution requests the Commission to suspend all Community contributions to the implementation of the projects in question until Parliament has delivered an opinion on the basis of the report to be submitted to it by the Committee on Energy and Research. It should be noted, however, that the Community budget does not at present contribute to any FBR programme, though one such programme has received both Euratom and European Investment Bank loans. The European Parliament has no control over either the granting of Euratom or EIB loans.

9. Paragraph 3 of the motion for a resolution calls for the suspension of all work connected with breeder reactor projects and the setting in motion of procedures for a public or parliamentary enquiry in order to determine whether the concern expressed in the Geneva Appeal is well founded.

With regard to paragraph 3 it should be noted that the Community has no legal competence in this respect, any decision to suspend work on fast breeder reactors or conduct a judicial enquiry would be an internal matter for the Member State concerned. The Community can only suspend work on Community projects;

The Committee also wishes to point out that

- the plutonium being created in thermal reactors should be used. The International Nuclear Fuel Cycle Evaluation (INFCE) study came to the conclusion that it would be more economical and environmentally desirable to burn plutonium in FBRs than in thermal reactors;
- there is a need for nuclear fuels to be used efficiently as uranium is a finite resource;
- all sources of energy will be required in the event of a major shortfall in oil deliveries.



### III. Consideration of the conclusions of the Geneva Appeal

10. Though the Committee on Energy and Research has been consulted on the motion for a resolution, and not on the text of the Geneva Appeal itself, nevertheless it would seem opportune to consider briefly the four conclusions reached by the authors of that Appeal.

11. Conclusions 1 & 3 of the Geneva Appeal are similar in intention to paragraphs 1 & 3 of the motion for a resolution, considered above.

12. Conclusion 2 of the Geneva Appeal calls for a referendum on Super Phénix and similar projects. It should be noted that the Geneva Appeal was aimed at national parliaments as well as the European Parliament. The European Parliament could not propose such a referendum for the following reasons:-

- this would constitute an unwarranted interference in the affairs of Member States;
- no mechanisms for such a referendum exist;
- democratic consultation in the Community is exercised indirectly through the elected members of the European Parliament.

13. Conclusion 4 of the Geneva Appeal calls for priority to be given to research and development on soft technologies. The Committee on Energy and Research has decided to prepare an own-initiative report on soft technologies and any decision taken at this time with regard to the priority to be accorded to soft technologies would prejudice the conclusions of that report. While it is generally felt that more emphasis should be given to "soft technologies", it would be unrealistic to imagine that these could, by themselves, replace hydrocarbons. Consideration must be given to all viable sources of energy.

14. Reference is made to the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the text of the Geneva Appeal, though not in its conclusions. With regard to this the Committee on Energy and Research has always maintained the need for strict adherence to the non-proliferation treaty so as to ensure that plutonium is not diverted to non-peaceful ends. This question was considered in detail in the report<sup>1</sup> of Mr Mitchell on the operation of the EURATOM inspectorate with particular reference to the allocation of duties between the Commission of the European Communities, the governments of the Member States and the IAEA in respect of the inspection of fissile materials in the EAEC, adopted by the European Parliament on 25 April 1979.

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<sup>1</sup>Doc. 3/79, OJ No. C 127 of 21.5.1979, page 44

15. The International Nuclear Fuel Cycle Evaluation, a two-year study which started work in October 1977 on the initiative of the U.S. Administration, presented its final reports in February 1980. Fifty-three countries and five international organisations participated in this study. Three of INFCE's working groups are of particular relevance to the subject of this report. These are:-

- Working Group No. 4, on reprocessing, plutonium handling and recycling
- Working Group No. 5, on breeder reactors
- Working Group No. 6, on spent fuel management.

16. In its conclusions INFCE maintains that political measures would be more effective than technical or mechanical constraints as a means of preventing nuclear arms proliferation, and thus reinforces the conclusions reached in Mr Mitchell's report. INFCE, set up as a means of evaluating non-proliferation techniques, has come out in favour of FBRs as the most efficient and environmentally acceptable means of using plutonium at present available.

#### IV. Opinion of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection

17. In its opinion (PE 65.884/fin., draftsman: Mrs ROUDY) the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection recommends the rejection of the motion for a resolution on the Geneva Appeal. A minority opinion takes a contrary view. The Committee on Energy and Research accepts the opinion of the majority of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection.

#### V. Minority opinion of the Committee on Energy and Research

18. A minority of the Committee on Energy and Research was of the opinion that the Committee should endorse the views expressed in the motion for a resolution Doc. 1-394/79, particularly with regard to the holding of a hearing on fast breeder reactors

#### VI. Conclusions

19. Your rapporteur believes that outstanding problems raised by the use of fast breeder reactors can best be solved by supporting all research that could contribute to the safety of such reactors. It would appear probable that FBRs will be of considerable utility during the early part of the 21st century prior to the hoped-for development of thermonuclear fusion, and that developments taking place at Creys-Malville, Kalkar and Dounreay could make a vital contribution to FBR research.

20. The Committee on Energy and Research would welcome a brief report from the Commission of the European Communities on (i) the implication for the Community of INFCE, in which it participated, and (ii) the Council of Europe's hearing on fast breeder reactors : economic and safety aspects.

21. In view of the need to make use of all reasonably-assured sources of energy as replacements for hydrocarbons, and for the reasons outlined above, the Committee on Energy and Research opposes the requests formulated in the motion for a resolution on the Geneva Appeal and the suspension of work on breeder reactors.

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AND  
CONSUMER PROTECTION

Draftsman : Mrs Y. ROUDY

On 23 November 1979 the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection appointed Mrs Roudy draftsman of the opinion.

At its meeting of 25 January 1980 the committee held an initial exchange of views. It considered the draft opinion at its meetings of 24 April, 24 June and 25 September and at the latter meeting decided to hold the final discussion on the basis of amendments tabled in writing.

At its meeting of 2 October 1980 it approved by 11 votes to 9 with 2 abstentions the amendment tabled by Mrs Schleicher (PE 65.884/rev./Amend.2), which recommended the committee responsible to reject the Geneva Appeal on procedural grounds.

Present: Mr Collins, chairman; Mr Alber, vice-chairman;  
Mr Johnson, vice-chairman; Mrs Weber, vice-chairman;  
Mrs Roudy, draftsman; Mr Ceravolo (deputizing for Mr Segré),  
Mr Combe, Mr Forth (deputizing for Sir Peter Vanneck), Mr Ghergo,  
Miss Hooper, Mrs Lentz-Cornette, Mrs Maij-Weggen, Mr Mertens,  
Mr Muntingh, Mr Demilly, Mrs Schleicher, Mrs Seibel-Emmerling,  
Mr Sherlock, Mrs Spaak, Mrs Squarcialupi and Mr Verroken.

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection recommends the committee responsible, the Committee on Energy and Research, to reject the motion for a resolution on the Geneva Appeal.

ANNEX I

MINORITY OPINION

A. A significant minority considered that a reply should be given to the fourfold request of the signatories to the Geneva Appeal:

1. that hearings be organized on the plutonium/soft technologies alternative;
2. that the people of Europe be consulted on the aforesaid alternative;
3. pending this consultation, that construction of the Super Phoenix and other fast-breeder reactors be halted;
4. that priority be given to research into and development of soft technologies.

The minority wished to reply in the affirmative to 1, 2 and 4 and in the negative to 3 as the fast-breeder has not been tested sufficiently for industrial exploitation and it is technically difficult to suspend construction of this reactor at this stage.

B. Two of the minority replied in the affirmative to all four requests.

C. Two members abstained as insufficient information had been given for a decision to be taken.

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION (Doc. 1-394/79)

tabled by Mr CAPANNA, Mrs BONINO, Mr PANNELLA and Mr COPPIETERS

pursuant to Rule 25 of the Rules of Procedure

on the Geneva Appeal and the suspension of work on breeder reactors

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Geneva Appeal (text annexed) signed by some 30,000 citizens of the countries of Western Europe, including some thousands of scientists and three Nobel Prize winners, addressed to the elected representatives of the citizens of Europe,
  - having regard to the serious concern expressed in that text as to the risk to the population from the planned construction of a nuclear reactor of the breeder type in the area of Creys-Malville,
  - whereas this risk also affects the citizens of a non-member country (Switzerland) who therefore have no means of objecting to the project,
  - whereas the governments of several member countries (France, Germany, Belgium and Italy) are involved in this project,
  - surprised that the Commission should have formally declared itself in favour of the project although no debate on its implications has taken place in Parliament and no decision on Community policy on this important subject has been taken in the Council,
1. Requests the Committee on Energy and Research to hold hearings as a matter of urgency on the question of breeder reactors (and in particular on the projects in hand at Malville and Kalkar) and to report to Parliament as soon as possible on their implications in all areas (especially as regards the safety of the population, relations with non-member countries, economic aspects);
  2. Requests the Commission to suspend all Community contributions to the implementation of the projects in question until Parliament has delivered an opinion on the basis of the report to be submitted to it by the Committee on Energy and Research;
  3. Calls on the governments concerned to suspend all work connected with breeder reactor projects and as a matter of urgency to set in motion such procedures for a public or parliamentary enquiry as they deem fit in order to determine whether the concern expressed in the Geneva Appeal is well founded.

## GENEVA APPEAL

AN APPEAL ADDRESSED FROM GENEVA BY MEMBERS OF THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY TO THE POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVES OF ALL EUROPEAN COUNTRIES AND ALL CANDIDATES FOR THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, SO AS TO PROVOKE A WIDE-RANGING PUBLIC DISCUSSION AND TO BRING ABOUT A VOTE BY THE POPULATIONS CONCERNED ON THE ALTERNATIVES TO THE FAST-BREEDER REACTOR AT CREYS-MALVILLE AND THE PLUTONIUM SOCIETY

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We, members of the academic community, belonging to different disciplines, citizens of many nationalities, holding different political views, aware of our moral responsibility both to our contemporaries and future generations, have decided to turn to you from Geneva - the cradle of many humanitarian endeavours - to tell you of our grave concern about the construction of the fast-breeder reactor Super Phoenix at Creys-Malville (France) and, more especially, about the type of society it might insidiously impose on the population of Europe.

We have come to the conclusion that, even though it is a logical development of the existing nuclear industry, because of the change in scale it represents, the construction of the fast-breeder reactor Super Phoenix and those which may follow it will inevitably have harmful social and political consequences, both immediately and in the near future, in addition to the technological hazards, which, while being improbable, are nonetheless very real and potentially disastrous.

It is just as though the similarity between a major but improbable accident and some of the foreseeable results of a nuclear conflict were blinding those responsible for Europe's nuclear policy to the possibility of radioactive contamination of the Rhone Basin. However, this prospect is by no means excluded in the Open Letter which some 1,300 scientists of the Geneva region addressed in November 1976 to the French, Italian and German Governments responsible for the construction of Super Phoenix and 'to the Swiss Government concerned by its geographical proximity'. Given a situation in which a technological danger comes close to a disaster, surely the utter absence of risk is the only acceptable solution and the advocates of fast-breeder reactors should be forced to prove such absence. What sensible person would disagree?

GENEVA APPEAL ASSOCIATION

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Some of the probable if not certain consequences of the plutonium society include the concentration and expansion of power - in all senses of the word - the spread of the military practice of secrecy to civil affairs which will be justified by the technological and, hence, military vulnerability of such a society, and its inevitable counterpart, the omnipresence of the police. The albeit brief history of the nuclear industry and the fait accompli policy pursued by the French Government with regard to the Super Phoenix project provide a good example of such corrosion of democracy for reasons of State. Lastly, at the international level, the plutonium option will lead in time to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; in the immediate future it will lead to a substantial change in our system of democratic rights and freedoms. What indeed remains of these values if a government is at liberty to endanger the biological existence not only of its own subjects but also of other Europeans by building a Frankenstein's monster: the Super Phoenix?

The deterministic argument of the supporters of fast-breeder reactors imagines the future only in terms of the immediate past and thus rules out all possibility of social choice. In this respect, nothing is more fallacious than the argument that there is an ever-growing need for energy, a need which they are doing their best to exaggerate by insidious propaganda for electric heating, which is a thermodynamic heresy. Rather than giving a boost to the economy or reducing unemployment, the plutonium path could well lead humanity into an ecological cul-de-sac and prevent it, while there is still time, from switching back to soft technologies which require abundant manpower. Moreover, far from freeing us from our growing dependence on the unquestionably limited supplies of fossil energy (which began with the industrial revolution less than 200 years ago), recourse to plutonium would distract us from giving priority to the development of the virtually inexhaustible flow of solar energy, the only source which could ensure humanity's long-term survival. Thus it would surely be prudent not only to curb investments in nuclear energy but also to transfer most of the large and rapidly growing sums of money that European nations are investing in huge projects which hasten the concentration of political power to research into and development of soft technologies whereby political power would be diffused. What sensible person would disagree?

Since we are convinced that fast-breeder reactors constitute an immense danger, that alternative solutions are to be found in soft technologies and that, at all events, the people of Europe have the right to be informed, we urge you to use all your influence to ensure that:

1. your parliament, in collaboration with all the institutions concerned, organize public, interdisciplinary hearings open to all views, on the plutonium/soft technologies alternative and, in conjunction therewith, draw up a statement of the arguments for and against the Super Phoenix and similar projects;
2. the people of Europe thus informed be asked to vote on the aforesaid alternative, on the Super Phoenix and on similar projects;
3. pending the results of these votes, the construction of the Super Phoenix and all other fast-breeder reactors be immediately suspended;
4. in your country's science policy, priority henceforth be given to research into and development of soft technologies.

We should be most grateful if you would inform us without delay of your personal stand on these four points. We are convinced that refusal to act would be tantamount to giving a blank cheque to those who, blinded by their immediate objectives, could lure humanity into a real rush towards oblivion.

In the hope that your response to this appeal will be favourable, we remain

Yours faithfully,

Geneva, 2 October 1978

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Jean-Francois AUBERT, Professor in the Faculties of Law of the Universities of Neuchâtel and Geneva, Conseiller national, Neuchâtel  
Monique BAUER-LAGIER, Conseiller national, Geneva  
André BIELER, Professor in the Faculty of Theology of the University of Lausanne  
Bernard BONVIN, Dominican friar, Geneva  
Lucien BOREL, Professor at the Federal Polytechnical School of Lausanne  
Michel BRELAZ, Historian, Geneva  
Janine BUENZOD, Ph.D., Geneva  
Bernard COURVOISIER, Professor in the Faculty of Medicine of Geneva  
Jean-Marc CHAPPUIS, Professor in the Faculty of Theology of the University of Geneva  
Charles ENZ, Professor in the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Geneva  
Olivier FATIO, Professor in the Faculty of Theology of the University of Geneva  
Giuseppe FIORE-DONNO, Professor in the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Geneva  
Lucien GIRARDIER, Professor in the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Geneva  
Philippe GRAVEN, Professor in the Faculty of Law of the University of Geneva  
Karl Stephan GRUNBERG, retired ILO official, Geneva  
Olivier GUISAN, Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Geneva  
Bruno HOLTZ, Editor, Fribourg  
Roger LACROIX, Professor in the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Geneva  
René LONGET, Member of the Grand Conseil of Geneva  
William OSSIPOW, Lecturer in the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences of the University of Geneva  
Michel de PERROT, Engineer-physicist, Geneva  
Anne PETITPIERRE, Barrister, Member of the Grand Conseil of Geneva  
Gilles PETITPIERRE, Professor in the Faculty of Law of the University of Geneva  
Ivo RENS, Professor in the Faculty of Law of the University of Geneva  
Philippe ROCH, Doctor of Biochemistry, Member of the Grand Conseil of Geneva  
Jean ROSSEL, Professor at the Institute of Physics of the University of Neuchâtel  
Denis de ROUGEMONT, Writer, Professor at the University Institute of European Studies, Geneva  
Pierre de SENARCLENS, Professor in the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences of the University of Lausanne  
Sven STELLING-MICHAUD, Historian, Emeritus Professor of the University of Geneva  
Erika SUTTER-PLEINES, Member of the Grand Conseil of Geneva.

