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3 legislators say:

Jury out on atomic power

By CRAIG PIECHURA



DOUG ROSS

Three local state legislators, who helped establish a legislative committee to investigate the safety of existing and proposed nuclear power plants in Michigan, say the jury is still out on the issue of nuclear energy's benefits versus its potential health risk.

In light of last month's radiation leak at Three Mile Island, one of the three local lawmakers — State Reps. Joseph Forbes and Wilbur "Sandy" Brotherton and State Sen. Doug Ross — are willing to go on record as opponents of nuclear power.

The three legislators say that utility companies need to have their cages rattled, but aren't ready to close down the reactors.

Forbes, an Oak Park Democrat from the 67th District, said that like many of his constituents in Southfield, Lathrup Village and Oak Park, he never worried about the risks of nuclear energy until Three Mile Island.

"Right now I object to it strenuously," Forbes said. "Just this morning Jack Anderson had a column in the paper that said the need for (radioactive) nuclear waste is so great that Carter ordered some of the stuff to be shipped in to help build hydrogen bombs. They use the waste again; somehow, they recycle it. That's a problem here in Michigan because Carter is leaning toward bringing in nuclear waste. The stuff lasts 250,000 years and here he's shipping it in. Just unbelievable."

Rep. Forbes said he's convinced the nuclear committee headed by Rep. Mark Clodfelter, a Flint Democrat, is not a knee-jerk, issue-oriented bureaucratic committee.

"The committee will come up for review in six months time or, under the Sunset Law, they're out of business," Forbes said.

WHILE SOME legislators favor a nuclear energy moratorium, Forbes said, "I feel that it is best to wait until the committee has completed its studies and reported back to the legislature."

Mayor jumps gun on announcing school purchase

Confusion surrounds last week's announcement by Farmington Hills Mayor Earl Oppertbauer that senior citizen housing could be built on the Bond School site.

Farmington School Board President Helen Prutow says she was surprised when learning the city council's plans for the property located at Thirteen Mile, west of Orchard Lake.

Last week the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) approved a 120 unit senior citizen-low income housing project to be built on the corner of Freedom and Drake Roads.

At that time Oppertbauer said that discussions between the city and school administrators were under way for the purchase of the Bond School property. The property would, said Oppertbauer, provide 150 additional units for senior citizen housing.

"If the Bond site is selected, council would limit the height of the building to be comparable to that of the old school building that now exists there," said Oppertbauer.

The vacated school structure is 43 feet high.

"When and if we get a proposal, we will discuss it," said Mrs. Prutow earlier this week. "I don't know what they are willing to pay for it or how much land they want."

The school is located on a 10-acre site.

The first the school board heard about the council's plan was on May 18, according to Mrs. Prutow, when Oppertbauer called district finance director William Prisk.

Oppertbauer told Prisk that the council was discussing purchase of Bond School at the following Monday's council session. That meeting never took place.

Mrs. Prutow said the board is in the process of deciding what to do with the vacant school property. None of the discussions revolved around senior citizen housing.

"But senior citizen housing on that spot looks good to me," she added.

The board has directed its legal counsel to study sale of the property

Farmington Republican Brotherton, who has long supported nuclear energy as an alternative to oil and coal, says the nuclear power industry should be able to withstand microscopic scrutiny but warns against "overreaction" to nuclear reactors.

Likewise, freshman State Sen. Ross, Democrat from Oak Park and an appointee to the 10-member joint house-senate committee, says "the issue is so important all debate must be done without great emotion and pre-judgment."

"There are two groups I strongly disagree with in this area," Ross said. "The pro-nuclear proponents and their general position that the citizenry is perfectly safe and what's all the fuss about. And then there's the group that has its mind made up that nuclear power will never be feasible."

Sen. Ross said, "I don't know all the answers to questions such as whether the safety factor is an acceptable cost to get the benefits of nuclear energy. Reactors are hardly foolproof, but how big are the risks?"

"Because we can't answer certain critical questions I say we should slow down a little bit. We are making deci-

sions that could take us on a course far down in history.

"Nuclear power is nothing to rush off and invest vast sums of money in for something that (may not) make sense economically."

"We must look before we leap. Go slow and look hard at all the facts."

Michigan has four nuclear power plants — Big Rock Point I; Cook I & II; and Palisades. One of the four — Big Rock Point, operated by Consumers Power near Charlevoix, has been shut down for repairs.

Three more plants are under construction — Enrico Fermi II at Lacuna Beach by Detroit Edison; and Midland I and II by Consumers Power. The Midland plants were designed by Babcock and Wilcox, who designed the Three Mile Island facility.

Two nuclear power plants in the planning stage for an area 15 miles west of Port Huron — Greenwood II and III were also designed by the Three Mile Island design firm for Detroit Edison.

If federal agencies regulate nuclear power facilities, what can the state legislative committee hope to accomplish?

"We have police powers under the state constitution," Sen. Ross answers. "The state legislature has control over issuance of bonds to finance these plants. Secondly, the data determining what do we allow utilities to charge customers and taxpayers comes under the Public Service Commission. And they must meet our environmental standards. We have control over siting, control over where they put them in. We can regulate the transportation and disposal of radioactive wastes in our state."

Brotherton, whose 64th congressional district includes Southfield, Farmington Hills, Lathrup Village and the city of Farmington, said he supported the investigative committee even though he is "one member of the legislature who has for some time opposed efforts to try to set nuclear power back and discontinue its use."

Brotherton said he hopes to see nuclear power "withstand the test" of public and legislative scrutiny but adds that "the time has come for accountability."

"I supported the resolution because I felt it was evident to me that the things that happened at Three Mile Island and further happenings in the last month in Michigan caused a lot of peoples' confidence to be shaken. I know mine was."

"... I say give the committee the authority to do its damndest to embarrass the supporters of nuclear power. If (government or business) deserve to be embarrassed, let them. Too many people are taking their responsibility so lightly. Maybe it's time to shake them up good."

Volunteers honored

By MARY GNIEWEK

Some state senators called it "absolute fluff, an inexcusable waste of money."

But the state legislature still managed to allocate \$35,000 to promote Michigan Vietnam Veterans Awareness Week (May 28-June 3) to allow persons to express their gratitude to the soldiers who served in Vietnam.

For some Farmington vets, the recognition is too little too late. Hurt, misunderstood and bitter are the words they use to describe their feelings.

"Where were they 10 years ago?" asked Farmington Police Lt. John Santomauro about the program.

Santomauro is one of 200,000 combat veterans who should receive a six-page pamphlet providing information on veterans programs and a bumper sticker proclaiming "I'm a Vietnam veteran" in red and yellow print (the official colors of the Republic of Vietnam).

He's still bitter about the cold reception veterans encountered at home — even at a Veterans Hospital where he says he was treated coolly when inquiring about benefits for a battle injury.

"When World War II ended, there was a big movement to adequately compensate returning veterans. But with Vietnam, the government was torn between guilt to compensate veterans and a reluctance to deal with the war. The two became intermingled."

TEN YEARS AGO, Santomauro (now 30) was a tall, lanky Marine staff sergeant serving in the First Battalion, Third Marine Division, special landing force in Vietnam.

He remembers coming home to a nation "that carried on like nothing happened. The returning vet was pushed aside. No one wanted to deal with how he felt."

World War veterans came home to the Andrews Sisters singing "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy of Company C." Santomauro came home the year County Joe and the Fish were singing about the facility of Vietnam at Woodstock, and the nation was marching to the strains of "Give peace a chance."

"It's not so much the glory or the ticker tape parades you're after, understanding," he said. "We're not all mad dog killers. I think veterans have done well in a society that didn't want them back."

"People were very unaffected and I was so affected," he continued. "It was very traumatic. I don't know how people could be so detached when 50,000 or 60,000 young men were killed."

Two small Marine Corp emblems



Vietnam veterans are still haunted by their days in uniform as the state moves to dedicate a week in their honor.

Viet vets remain bitter despite state plaudits



LT. JOHN SANTOMAURO

"It's not so much the glory or the ticker tape parades you're after. You're after understanding. We're not all mad dog killers. I think veterans have done well in a society that didn't want them back."

— Farmington Police Lt. John Santomauro

served 13-month tours of duty in Vietnam as enlisted men. Both feel somewhat betrayed. Both resent amnesty and the prevailing American attitude about the war.

"As veterans, we share very intense feelings," Santomauro explained. "You go over there 18 and come back 40. There are things you experience that you can never duplicate later in life."

"Everything has a shallow feeling about it. It's hard to feel intense about anything. There's a saying: 'Life has a flavor the sheltered shall never know.' I really believe that."

Santomauro and Matusiak scoff at recently produced Vietnam films. The only one of a half dozen both saw was "The Boys in Company C" — about the Marines. They vowed to see no others.

"I treated the veteran in a humiliating, degrading way. It was very unrealistic," Santomauro said. "And I've never seen a Marine with hair as long as Jon Voight's in 'Coming Home.'"

ADDED: MATUSIAK: "I thought the movie stunk. It portrayed the Army as motorcycle gang dope addicts. That's wrong. I never saw anyone doing dope there. But that's all movies want to portray — dope and games."

Both have their own opinions about how the war was fought. Both blame political, not military leaders, for the blunders.

"I think the war took a lot of patriotism out of us," Santomauro said. "It's very hard to be patriotic when you're bitter."

Would they do it again?

Santomauro: "There's always an undertone that we did something wrong. But veterans are coming out of the closet. We don't have anything to be ashamed of, dammit. I'm very proud of the fact that I served and proud I served with the Marines."

"Would I do it again? I don't know. When I came back, I resented those who didn't go, telling me about the horrors of war. I guess I've developed an attitude between 'I care' and 'I don't care.' I really don't know where I'm at yet."

Matusiak: "It's really funny, but I'd probably do it all over again. I'd never change the experience I had for anything else in the world. My biggest complaint was the way the war was fought. If we're going to help a country, let's do it right."

"No veteran wants something for nothing. We just want respect. We did our job. I don't know if anyone will ever be able to tell the truth about the war."

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