

Air quality delays necessary

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The government must be willing to delay air quality deadlines to relieve the pressure on oil and gas supplies, Kottman said. "We have to make trade-offs. Any harm done will not be catastrophic."

Most higher-sulphur coal lies in the eastern United States, yet eastern industry must ship most of the coal it uses from the western United States where three-quarters of the low-sulphur coal reserves are. This is wasteful, Kottman said.

Oil shale reserves are plentiful enough to be a fuel source that would last over several centuries, he said. "We have the technology to extract oil from the shale."

Natural gas supplies will last between 20 and 90 years at present consumption rates, he said, and synthetic gas from coal will be available by the 1980's.

Nuclear energy feasible

"Reserves of fossil fuels will eventually be depleted," Kottman warned. "Nuclear energy is the only feasible energy source. . . It may be the key."

Kottman said the 47 operating nuclear plants in the United States are producing less electric power than all the hydroelectric plants. The "fear for safety" is delaying construction, he said, even though most scientists believe the possibility of radiation danger is "exceedingly remote."

He said 60 nuclear plants are under construction and another 84 are planned. However, "This falls far short of the 1000 plants the United States will need by the year 2000," he added.

Floating nuclear plants two or three miles offshore could be built "rapidly and efficiently," he said. But these fission reactors use uranium, already in short supply as a fuel, Kottman said.

Breeder reactors extend supplies

Breeder nuclear reactors would extend uranium reserves but would generate radioactive waste that must be safely stored, he said. Kottman predicted that breeder reactors would supply a large part of national electricity needs by the 1990's.

"Nuclear fusion may well be the answer," Kottman said, but such reactors are still in the future and may never arrive unless scientists can show fusion is feasible. "If fusion works, it will be one of man's greatest achievements," he suggested.

Agriculture probably cannot cut back its fuel consumption because productivity would be damaged, Kottman said. "Conservation measures can be adopted only if production is not lowered," he said.

"Next to inflation the energy crisis looms as our most serious problem, our greatest challenge," Kottman concluded. "Abundant energy supplies will become available in the future. If this is to happen, we are all going to have to pitch in and do our part."

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