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**EDITORIAL DESK****Nuclear Power: Solution or Problem?****(NYT) 255 words**

Published: May 20, 2005

To the Editor:

Re "Old Foes Soften to New Reactors" (front page, May 15):

Nuclear energy can stabilize the climate, some argue. But if we are to safely and securely exit the carbon age, we must perform environmental and health impact assessments of our options.

We've learned that exploring for oil, as well as drilling, transporting, refining, burning and securing it, carries unsustainable local and global costs.

Generating nuclear power means that we must mine, mill, transport, process and store uranium. Each step is hazardous for workers, communities and countries because of the potential for groundwater contamination, accidents, theft and attack. We will spend hundreds of billions of dollars trying to clean up the radioactive waste already generated.

We need the proper incentives for conservation and noncentralized power generation through tidal, geothermal, wind, solar, fuel-cell, hybrid, energy-efficient and "smart" technologies, along with "green buildings," smart growth and rational public transportation systems.

The clean energy transition can provide the engine of growth for the 21st century.

Paul R. Epstein, M.D.

Richard Clapp

Boston, May 16, 2005

The writers are, respectively, associate director of the Center for Health and the Global Environment at Harvard Medical School; and a professor at Boston University School of Public Health.

Drawing (Drawing by Peter Zierlein)

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