

EDF CRITIQUE: Malcolm D. Blakeney

CONSULTATION PROBLEMS

The three stage process of consultation with EDF (National Policy Statement-site assessment; Design & Site licence; and Planning Application) is a vital opportunity for SPLG to feed in its concerns. However, EDF only want to consult with SCC & SCDC, not SPLG. But Parish & Town Councils are part of the democratically elected local authority structure. Therefore it would seem patently obvious to include SPLG, as a point of reference with a consortium of councils surrounding Sizewell. To some extent this consultation problem can be addressed in five ways by SPLG- acquaint SCC & SCDC of its needs; arrange talks with EDF further up the chain of command; directly lobby the government; work with and through other partners (Heritage Coast Market Towns Initiative-businesses); and negotiate a place at the consultation table with EDF and government.

FUNDING & STRATEGIC ISSUES

The expansion of the nuclear industry in East Suffolk could encourage other employers to set up business in the area. Such a development will require improvements in communications, education and training to support employment and High Tec industries of the future. EDF appear reluctant to resource an expansion of training for local people, beyond its own skills requirements for the nuclear power station at Sizewell.

In essence EDF will fund what is considered necessary for building two reactors at Sizewell. Any infrastructure issues that require large scale funding is considered the responsibility of local & central government. EDF do appear to support new local initiatives (e.g. Farnham bypass) but not as contributors to the funding. Yet for the next 60 years EDF will generate huge profits from the sale of electricity, on which Britain is totally dependent.

PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN STATE, INDUSTRY AND COMMUNITY

EDF have expressed a parochial view, only community funding that will support their business at Sizewell. At one level it is legitimate that a private business should responsibly run the plant at a profit. However, such a huge long term enterprise in a rural location has social responsibilities too. In the 19th Century paternalistic employers such as Leverhulme and Rowntree took responsibility for the health, housing and social welfare of their employees and local community. After the Second World War the Welfare State became the lead role in the community. But by the 21st Century the State began to withdraw and in turn built partnerships with the private sector or privatised State monopolies.

EDF appears not to engage with the resource gap left by shifts in recent social policy. The State does not require new build applicants in Britain to sign a social contract, designed to contribute funds to community needs. Without such a contract it will be easy for EDF to slip past social responsibility. The present government want nuclear power to bridge a huge gap in supply and reduce the carbon footprint. However, the State is slow to make social demands upon the private sector. Is this really a partnership between State, Industry and Community?