

# WINFO

Newsletter of Women in Nuclear WIN No. 8 (4/94)

## The Great Debate

**Possibly the liveliest debate at ENC'94 in Lyon was during the WIN meeting on the themes of public acceptance and risk communication.**

Roxanne Summers from the Canadian Nuclear Association recommended that communications directed at women must: avoid scientific or economic efficiency as a justification; avoid jargon; and avoid using industry or government spokespersons. Concern for social values, protection of the environment and safety should be stressed. Third party spokespersons are best.



WIN  
International  
President  
Irene Aegerter

Irene Currie from utility Scottish Nuclear speaking on bridging the gender gap in Britain, explained that in the UK women accounted for only 19% of all nuclear jobs but a tiny 3% of nuclear jobs at director level. More female recruitment and women-to-women communications can bridge the gap.

Anne Bisconti, from the US Nuclear Energy Institute in Washington, spoke on waste and radiation. She summarised research as follows: radiation and radioactive waste is scary; nevertheless most people want to keep the beneficial use of radioactive materials; people support solutions for waste disposal in preference to just talking about the problem. This new positive model, she argued, is the way to approach the public.

Corrine Souwer, from the Netherlands Energy Research Foundation explained that men and women approach problems differently. Men are guided by justice, while women go by concern.

"I say risk, you say risk: why don't we mean the same?" asked Agneta Rising from the Swedish power utility Vattenfall.

She was referring to perception versus reality. If someone thinks that a nuclear power plant might blow up you don't have a technical problem but a communications problem. We must understand perceived risk. And women and men perceive risk differently. Men assess probability while women emphasize possible consequences.

A lively debate followed. Points of clarification were sought, men's opinions were heard and applauded. The analyses of gender differences inspired most comment. "I see these traits of justice and chance already in my young sons," said one attentive and slightly alarmed mother in the audience, "Is this something my sons have learnt as males or is it genetic? Were they born that way?" There was a moment's silence for no one had an answer to that.

## Standing Ovation

The small WIN stand at ENC'94 was always the most crowded. This was a fitting tribute to a pioneering group of nuclear women. The WIN video was on continuous showing. Many new members signed up, both women and men, including the IAEA's director general Dr. Hans Blix.



Photo Call at the WIN Stand

## Women and Urban Energy

**WIN France hosted a meeting attended by 150 opinion formers during ENC'94.**

The highlight of the meeting chaired by France Brès-Tutino was a debate on Women and Urban Energy. Moderated by Jean-Pierre Pages from France's CEA, the audience was given a rapid but comprehensive survey of energy in France from EDF's Jean-Pierre Chaussade. Catherine Gaujacq, the new manager of Penly NPP, spoke about the importance of on-the-spot communications to influence opinion leaders.

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## Report from ENC'94

### Highlights of the main congress

Optimism was the buzz as more than 5500 people from 45 countries gathered to meet with over 500 organizations. Schools and women's groups, engineers and scientists, journalists and the young were all in evidence. "We're not just technocrats," emphasized ENS immediate past president Colette Lewiner, opening the congress, "Atoms for Energy means life – a better, even more varied life. We have confidence in its future."

### Key-note speeches

"We need a new, positive spirit for the revival of nuclear energy in Europe," said ENS president Pekka Silvennoinen, "Nuclear is unambiguously safe for humankind and clean for the environment."

IAEA director general Hans Blix asked: "Will the decoupling of nuclear energy from nuclear weapons make it more acceptable to the public? Shall we be able to use more electricity generated by nuclear power which does not add to global warming?"

### Outsider

CNN's David Feingold provided an outsider's view. He talked about the nuclear industry's track record in communicating with the media and quoted Jacques de la Ferte from the NEA "Just as nuclear requires a safety culture, it also requires an information culture." He saw technical changes in communication as providing a route to freedom, and subsequently, a demand for greater accountability. The challenge for nuclear is to meet that demand with clearer communications.

### Safety

"Safety will never be final," EDF inspector general Pierre Tanguy reminded a panel on the topic. He agreed with the need for better exchanges of operating, backfitting and research experience.

To assess safety and when to backfit, both deterministic and probabilistic methods should be used, said Cornelis Kalverboer (Netherlands EPZ utility). Hans-Ulrich Fabian (PreussenElektra utility) wanted safety harmonization at the European level.

### Fuel cycle and waste

To reprocess or to dispose direct? The clear answer from Neville Chamberlain (BNFL) was: "We should not be closing options." On repositories, Sten Bjurström (SKB, Sweden) and Hans Issler (Nagra, Switzerland) stressed the importance of suitable geology and good host community relations.

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## Diary

The WIN annual meeting for 1995 will be held June 15-16 on Sweden's beautiful west coast. Participants will be able to visit Ringhals NPP and Sweden's second largest city of Gothenburg.

## PIME'95

### Why WINners should come to Lucerne in January.

PIME is the annual meeting-place for nuclear information professionals seeking working solutions to their problems. PIME '95 runs from January 29 – February 1. Building trust is the main theme: building trust with the general and local public and special groups as the media, environmentalists and women. Public communication in the run-up to the 10th anniversary of Chernobyl is also featured.

There will be almost 50 contributors from 25 countries. More than half are from outside Western Europe – especially from Eastern Europe, the Far East and the Americas. There are more than a dozen presentations by women. Members of WIN are also chairing sessions and participating in workshops and numerous panel exchanges.

Ask for your PIME programme by fax:

**PIME'95 c/o ENS, POB 5032  
CH-3001 Berne Switzerland**

**Tel:+41 31 3206111  
Fax:+41 31 3824466**

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## Publications on Women in Science

**The importance of women to the development of nuclear technology has been recognised in a recent book by Jonathan Tennenbaum.**

Kernenergie: Die weibliche Technik (Nuclear Energy: a feminine technology) is published in German and covers the achievements of over a dozen women from Marie Curie to Chien-Shiung Wu and Dixy Lee Ray. His concluding chapters are entitled Mrs. Plutonium and The Emancipation of Nuclear Energy. The book costs DM28.80 ISBN 3-925725-14-8.

### Superstar

Meanwhile chairperson of WIN Norden and WIN executive group member, Agneta Rising is the subject of an article in Euroenergy magazine. The journalist of this piece is quite captured by Agneta's approach to nuclear communications. Under the banner "superstar" Ms. Rising is even compared to Sweden's most famous other Agneta, namely Agnetha Fältskog from the pop group Abba!

### Critical Mass

A recent issue of "Science" addresses the paradox of critical mass for women in academic science. Critical mass, defined as around 15%, is the point at which a minority group starts to influence the majority and bring about change. Observations of a minority group (women) in academic science show that despite gaining critical mass, other factors prevent change and women remain isolated. Key factors are the fragmentation of women into subgroups (for example young and old or traditional and relational) and the lack of change in structure of the scientific workplace to accompany the growing number of women. More detail from Science Vol. 266 7th October 1994.