

# افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نباشد تن من مباد بدین بوم و بر زنده یک تن مباد  
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

[www.afgazad.com](http://www.afgazad.com)

[afgazad@gmail.com](mailto:afgazad@gmail.com)

European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

BY RON JACOBS

13.05.23

## *Atomic Bamboozle: An Industry of Lies*

Janice Haaken's new film *Atomic Bamboozle: The False Promise of a Nuclear Renaissance* begins with a nuclear engineer stating that if he were "czar of the world," he would ban nuclear weapons and all other uses with the possible exception of research. That comment is almost immediately followed by an overconfident and smiling former Texas governor and Secretary of Energy, Rick Perry, introducing what he calls the millennial brain trust of nuclear energy. The haughty self-assuredness of the young people in this "brain trust" is apparent in their business suits and well-fed faces. This group, Perry tells us, will "make nuclear energy cool again."

The film is about what nuclear energy and its supplicant media tell us is a nuclear renaissance. As Attorney Greg Kafoury makes clear, not even two minutes in, this so-called renaissance is nothing but the same old routine where the industry and government pretend they have come up with solutions to the problem of nuclear waste storage. This solution then turns out to be letting future generations deal with it, which is no solution. Like so many other ongoing issues related to climate change and capitalism, *Atomic Bamboozle* makes it very clear that the pursuit of the dollar trumps all other possibilities.

Haaken is a psychologist and documentary filmmaker whose previous films include a two-part series titled *Necessity*—an award-winning set about climate justice and resistance. She is based in Oregon, which is where her new film is partially filmed. The film focuses on the movement against the Trojan reactor on the Columbia River between Oregon and Washington. The plant was the only commercial nuclear plant in Oregon. After years of protests from 1977 on, it was finally decommissioned in 1992 after cracks were discovered in the tower. The plant was then disassembled, with the tower's final action being imploded in 2006. The footage of that implosion represented both a real and symbolic victory.

Despite the look at the Trojan plant, the film's real focus is not history but the present and future of nuclear power. The newest attempt to make the industry palatable to the public again is a concept the industry calls small modular reactors or SMRs. These reactors are built mostly underground and considerably smaller than the giant complexes we currently associate with nuclear power. However, as University of Vancouver physicist M.V. Ramana points out, the way these reactors work is no different than those currently operating. As Ramana continues, he remarks on the uncanny ability of nuclear power advocates to pretend that these reactors are somehow modern and, therefore, different than previous reactors when in fact they use exactly the same technology. This technology was developed during the Manhattan Project to build an atomic weapon. In other words, the SMRs are using technology that is around eighty years old. This means that the issues related to the reactor design and operation of those original reactors remain. Little has changed but the size of the housing of the reactor buildings.

Yet, even in Oregon, where a law is on the books that forbid the construction of new nuclear power plants until a viable solution is found to store nuclear waste, the industry and its supplicants in the media and government are trying to overturn the law. This is so they can build planned SMRs along the Columbia River. As Ramana also points out, not only is nuclear power more expensive than wind and solar (by a very large ratio), the SMRs are even more expensive given the smaller amount of electricity produced and the simple fact of more reactors being built. Furthermore, research shows that SMRs will create even more nuclear waste than larger plants. Most readers probably know there is no way to store this waste safely. Also, as any honest observer will tell you, the US Department of Energy, which oversees nuclear power in the United States, is little more than an appendage of the well-financed nuclear industry. That industry is also closely tied to the weapons industry in the US.

So, what happened to parts of the decommissioned Trojan nuclear power plant as it was taken apart? They were encased in concrete and put in the ground at Hanford Nuclear Reservation in western Washington as CounterPunch editor Joshua Frank details in his 2022 book *Atomic Days. The Untold Story of the Most Toxic Place in America*, Hanford is an incredibly toxic place in the United States. That toxicity is directly related to the weapons research conducted there and nuclear waste storage under its surface. The storage depot is no longer being added to, yet the cleanup of the site is itself toxic. If it weren't for protests by indigenous peoples and their allies in Washington, Oregon, and elsewhere, the cleanup would not have begun. Currently, spokespeople for the Yakima Nation and representatives of other indigenous peoples are opposed to SMRs being built along the Columbia. The ongoing attacks on this continent's Indigenous are present in the nuclear industry's never-ending attempts to build more plants at public expense.

Watching *Atomic Bamboozle: The False Promise of a Nuclear Renaissance* pissed me off. The fact that some of the wealthiest people and firms in the world are intent on forcing us to accept their lies about nuclear power while they guarantee that their wealth will not suffer no matter what happens to their nuclear plants is just the tip of the iceberg. At the same time, the volume and nature of information regarding nuclear energy's numerous faults in the film made me determined to spread the word about this documentary. Likewise, the discussion and footage of the protests demanding the shutdown of the Trojan plant reminded me that people can make a difference. Indeed, they must make a difference. This is an activist film. Although its immediate intention is to prevent nuclear power plant construction in Oregon and Washington, its message is universal. Nuclear power is not an answer to climate change. It is just another way for those with money and power to expand what they already have.

*Atomic Bamboozle* is screening at the Hollywood Theater in Portland, Oregon, on May 21 and the Kiggins Theater in Vancouver, Washington, on June 7. CounterPunch editor Joshua Frank will introduce the film at both showings and discuss his book, Atomic Days: The Untold Story of the Most Toxic Place in America.

**Ron Jacobs** is the author of Daydream Sunset: Sixties Counterculture in the Seventies published by CounterPunch Books. His latest offering is a pamphlet titled Capitalism: Is the Problem. He lives in Vermont. He can be reached at: [ronj1955@gmail.com](mailto:ronj1955@gmail.com).

MAY 12, 2023