For the past two years, the planned nuclear power plant at Seabrook, New Hampshire, has been the focus of the opposition to nuclear energy in the U.S. A series of demonstrations and occupations at the Seabrook site, ranging in size from a handful of people to nearly 20,000 last June, have brought national attention to the struggle. Yet the movement has not succeeded in preventing construction of the plant.

This fall, just as the political and legal challenges to Seabrook appeared to have failed, a new crisis arose for the Public Service Company (PSC), the main investor-owned electric utility sponsoring the plant. Putting aside the usual objections based on environmental risks, activists in New Hampshire built a movement to oppose efforts by PSC to finance Seabrook's rapidly increasing construction costs through sharp increases in electricity prices. The widespread opposition to the increases helped bring about the defeat of Meldrim Thomson—the reactionary governor of the state who is an ardent advocate of "nukes"—in November's election. The victor, Hugh Gallen, based his campaign on opposition to the higher rates. He vowed to support legislation outlawing the inclusion of the capital costs of construction-work-in-progress (CWIP) in the rate base, the basis on which the allowed profits of utilities are computed. PSC insists it cannot continue to finance its share of Seabrook—whose estimated final cost has risen from $800 million to $2.5 billion—without CWIP. Thus, while construction continues on the plant (the first of the two planned reactors is about 13 percent completed), the future of the entire project is uncertain as PSC weighs the alternatives: selling part of its 50 percent share, seeking state guarantees for its bonds, fighting Gallen on CWIP, or giving up on Seabrook entirely. The anti-nuclear movement clearly hopes the last alternative will be the one chosen, but PSC probably feels it has too much invested in its big nuke to give up now.

The future of Seabrook must also be seen in terms of the current overall situation of nuclear power in the U.S.—which includes both the economics of nuclear energy and the strength of the anti-nuke movement.

The nuclear industry itself is facing a crisis which will probably reduce the role of nukes in the general capitalist energy picture. The demand for electricity has not been growing at rates sufficient to justify the huge costs of nuclear plants. The reason for this is that the general level of industrial pro-
duction remains low as business continues with its "slow investment" strategy for coping with the political uncertainties of the current period. As a result, analysts now foresee only 200 reactors in operation in the U.S. by the end of the century (there are now about 70), instead of the 1,000 predicted five years ago. Orders for new reactors have slowed down to a trickle (4 in 1977), and many projects are being canceled. Some business planners are turning back to coal, despite the nightmarish labor relations involved in its production.

The anti-nuclear movement is also in a state of flux. In particular, the Clamshell Alliance, the coalition which organized the direct action against Seabrook, is facing both internal and external problems. The Ku Klux Klan and other rightwing groups have vowed to attack any new demonstrations against Seabrook, and there have been reports of increased surveillance and disruption of Clamshell and other anti-nuclear groups by police and private investigative agencies. On the inside, dissident Clamshell members are fighting the attempts by the de facto leadership of the Alliance to abandon militant tactics.

It is still unclear to what extent the anti-nuclear movement has contributed to the crisis of the industry. Yet what does seem clear is that the movement has gone as far as it can with the environmental objections to nukes: issues of radiation, waste disposal, accidental meltdown of a reactor, etc. The task now is to confront not only financial issues such as CWIP, but the political contradiction between the goal of reducing labor time and that of decentralizing control over technology. Much of the anti-nuclear movement has romanticized labor-intensive, "appropriate" (usually solar) technology and ignored the role of large-scale energy production, including nukes, in the shortening of the working day. The Left, at the same time, has acknowledged the movement as a legitimate part of the struggle against capital but has uncritically accepted socialist nukes. These positions are inadequate, for the issue is not one of a choice among technologies or simply the form of ownership of the means of energy production. The problem now is to determine how energy fits into the autonomous reorganization of working class power, how physical power relates to political power.

While it seems unlikely that nukes would be compatible with working class autonomy from the energy industry, solar energy, often presented as a panacea, would not automatically be. U.S. corporations are already beginning to capitalize on solar in an effort to transform it into simply another area of accumulation. Business Week (October 9 issue) recently published a
cover story on "the coming boom in solar energy," reporting that the solar industry could grow from its current level of $150 million to as much as $20 billion in two decades. The story noted that "contrary to most impressions, the solar business is not just a cottage industry; it includes corporate behemoths such as Exxon, General Electric, Lockheed, and Westinghouse."

The real issue is not whether we split atoms or collect sunlight, but now energy fits into the process of gaining more power over our lives.

THE NEW IMMIGRATION: FOREIGN CAPITAL SEEKS SAFETY IN THE U.S.

One dramatic symptom of the present crisis of international capitalism is the enormous increase in the level of foreign investment in the U.S. during the last five years. On the run from urban guerillas, kidnappers and general political instability in Europe and elsewhere, foreigners are turning to America as the land of safe opportunity, the pillar of private wealth and free-market enterprise. Whether or not this assessment of the U.S. is correct, foreign investment here jumped 50% between 1973 and 1976, and now totals more than $30 billion. From plush Manhattan condominiums to suburban shopping centers to major chemical companies, the buying spree is continuing at a feverish pitch.

These investors appear to fall into two categories. First there are those who are seeking secure investments for their personal wealth or corporate cash. They include rich individuals, like German billionaire Karl Flick who feels much safer making his home in Colorado than in Europe, as well as small companies or well-to-do professionals. Common types of purchases in this category are corporate acquisitions, government securities, and large amounts of real estate. For example, in Western states much farm land has been acquired at high prices under agreements in which the original owner continues to manage the property for the foreign investor. Many of these transactions are hard to detect, since buyers frequently choose to remain camouflaged through the use of banks, lawyers or corporations.

The second category includes companies which are moving production facilities to the U.S. "West German" cuckoo clocks are now being made in Virginia, "French" skis in Vermont, and "Japanese" zippers in Georgia. Such investors are attracted by an overall investment package which includes America's large market, labor costs which have been increasing less rapidly here than in other industrial countries, and tax incentives.

In order to attract this second group and the jobs they bring, State governments have devised aggressive selling campaigns. Twenty-three States have set up offices in Europe to seek out foreign investors, and many have placed advertisements in overseas business publications. Winning over an investor can require smooth salesmanship, promises of generous tax benefits, offers to pay for the training of workers and, in many cases, guarantees of a non-unionized labor force. Just as U.S. companies have moved South and overseas to avoid labor militancy, foreign companies coming here prefer to invest where union organization is weakest. For instance, when Michelin tire company decided to build a factory in the U.S., it
chose South Carolina, where only 8% of the labor force is unionized.

Even when foreign corporations have accepted the presence of unions, they have expected that the desire for jobs would induce a high level of worker cooperation. Just two months ago this strategy backfired in the case of a Volkswagen plant in Western Pennsylvania.

In addition to promises of tax incentives, the company was attracted to the area because of its large pool of experienced and skilled labor. After an elaborate hiring process, 2,000 employees were chosen and last April the assembly line was put into operation. Only six months later, on October 8th, rank and file workers voted overwhelmingly to shut down the line rather than accept the 3-year contract worked out for them by the United Auto Workers Union (UAW) and Volkswagen management. The strike action began when employees learned that the contract provided wages and benefits inferior to those paid by U.S. automakers.

Though this wildcat strike lasted only one week, its impact has been very great. For one thing, it has created doubts about the ability of American unions to guarantee stable and predictable labor relations. The UAW bargaining committee had approved the contract unanimously and expected no resistance by the rank and file. It was even more surprised than the company when the workers struck.

Second, the strike raises the possibility that workers will not agree to take less than the going wage in order to help foreign investors move in. Other foreign automakers, including Japan's Honda and Toyota, have said this could stop them from initiating production in the U.S.

In other words, this incident highlights the key problem with the belief that the United States is a safe place to do business: in many ways, the American worker is an unknown to prospective foreign investors. Unions here are not as ideological as elsewhere and, in parts of the country, they have been kept out altogether. However, this does not mean that workers are the docile, pro-capitalist lot that State governments are selling. The UAW is not the only union to be forced back to the bargaining table by angry workers; this year's coal strike was a powerful example of the strength of the rank and file in a different sector.

In response to such rebelliousness, U.S. companies have moved operations to Mexico, South Korea and Taiwan. Nevertheless, foreign companies now wish to invest in the U.S., and retain high hopes of finding cooperative workers. This indicates that much confusion exists in the minds of international investors concerning the safest path for capital to travel. They must now choose among increasingly unstable and undesirable alternatives.

When critical philosophers point their finger at reality, unreliable philosophers study the finger.

--A WISE OWL