

Another View of Energy Future in ‘Pandora’s Promise’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on June 17, 2013 - 4:41pm

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Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – Who are we to believe any more? On one side is a corporate information media, desperately trying to sell soap in between their boardroom agendas. On the other, is the massive and barely sourced repository called the internet. Between those two is the documentary “Pandora’s Promise.”

Distributed by CNN FILms (yes, that CNN), the film is a pro-nuclear energy screed, an opposing view that pretty much goes against years of “No Nukes” protests, meltdowns like Three Mile Island and Homer Simpson. It does its job in an entertaining way, trotting out the notable experts and counterpointing the naysayers. It is rather suspicious that the “Danger” sign is automatically put up every time nuclear energy is discussed, and the film does rationally provide a reasonable opposing argument, BUT, going back to the corporate information media, who are we suppose to believe?

The provocative title “Pandora’s Promise” refers to what was left in that box of mythology, which was hope. So the premise is the hope of nuclear energy – cleaner, more renewable and able to function in remote areas – will provide vital electrical power. This is the next challenge of the developing world, delivering the civilizing effects of electrical power to parts of the planet that don’t have it, while keeping up with the energy consumption of mass populations.



Three Mile Island in ‘Pandora’s Promise’
Photo credit: CNN FILms

Serving up a parade of mostly environmental experts and nuclear scientists, the documentary provides the advantages of a nuclear power future, and proves the safety of the science very effectively. The electric grid is collapsing from the strain of a necessity for more power, plus with wind and solar energy still creating a huge manufacturing footprint, perhaps everything nuclear is the energy solution again.

This is somewhat jarring given the publicized meltdowns of Three Mile Island (Pennsylvania). Chernobyl (Ukraine) and Fukushima in Japan. But what the film especially proves is that the “fallout” of radiation from these famous “China Syndromes” is that they were not as dangerous as they were made out to be. There is a very telling moment in the media reports after the Fukushima meltdown – the plant was compromised by a massive tsunami – when breathless, white-toothed anchor people reported that clouds of radiation might reach California (never happened).

Two of the reporters in this film actually take a Geiger counter around the world to measure radiation levels (an inexact science in itself) and found much higher levels in ordinary atmospheres than they found in Chernobyl, for example. Again, measuring devices are what they are, but especially in the Fukushima case, when the radioactive clouds didn't happen, maybe there is a truth regarding nuclear power safety.

The waste element is explored as well. Renewable fuel methods are available, reducing the waste, and methods for waste disposal have been updated and have new methodologies. France is cited for their commitment to nuclear energy – all these wars for oil being a motivating factor – and their timetable is already producing the cheapest electricity in the world. These are all provable facts.



French Nuclear Power Plants Being Constructed in 'Pandora's Promise'
Photo credit: CNN Films

And another consideration in the film is the nature of older energy technologies like coal, oil and gas. The public relations behind these wealth-producing methods are entrenched and evil – think Montgomery Burns as a face. Touting the “dangers” of the viable, renewable nuclear energy is fairly easy when atomic bombs have already made their point. Who is to say that the oil industry, for example, isn't behind the misinformation? They have a lot to lose, and so does the the war machine industry.

But who really knows the truth, except for geek scientists and nerd students? I want to blissfully waste energy, dammit, and no one can stop me. Ha, ha, ha, says my evil laugh. It's a thin line between truth and propaganda, and it's constantly being blurred.

“Pandora's Promise” continued its limited release in Chicago on June 14th. See local listings for theaters and show times. Written and directed by Robert Stone. Not rated.



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