

Undernews For March 24, 2009

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The news while there's still time to do something about it

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"COLD FUSION" BACK IN PLAY AS "LOW ENERGY NUCLEAR REACTION"

[Agence France Presse](#) - Researchers at a US Navy laboratory have unveiled what they say is "significant" evidence of cold fusion, a potential energy source that has many skeptics in the scientific community.

The scientists described what they called the first clear visual evidence that low-energy nuclear reaction, or cold fusion devices can produce neutrons, subatomic particles that scientists say are indicative of nuclear reactions.

"Our finding is very significant," said analytical chemist Pamela Mosier-Boss of the US Navy's Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center (in San Diego, California).

"To our knowledge, this is the first scientific report of the production of highly energetic neutrons from a LENR device," added the study's co-author in a statement.

The study's results were presented at the annual meeting of the American Chemical Society in Salt Lake City, Utah.

The city is also the site of an infamous presentation on cold fusion 20 years ago by Martin Fleishmann and Stanley Pons that sent shockwaves across the world. Despite their claim to cold fusion discovery, the Fleishmann-Pons study soon fell into discredit after other researchers were unable to reproduce the results.

Paul Padley, a physicist at Rice University who reviewed Mosier-Boss's published work, said the study did not provide a plausible explanation of how cold fusion could take place in the conditions described.

"It fails to provide a theoretical rationale to explain how fusion could occur at room temperatures. And in its analysis, the research paper fails to exclude other sources for the production of neutrons," he told the Houston Chronicle.

"The whole point of fusion is, you're bringing things of like charge together. As we all know, like things repel, and you have to overcome that repulsion somehow."

But Steven Krivit, editor of the New Energy Times, said the study was "big" and could open a new scientific field.

The neutrons produced in the experiments "may not be caused by fusion but perhaps some new, unknown nuclear process," added Krivit, who has monitored cold fusion studies for the past 20 years.

"We're talking about a new field of science that's a hybrid between chemistry and physics."

The back story . . .

For quite a few years now, the Review has been a lonely voice pointing out that, contrary to near unanimous media ridicule, there were responsible scientific figures still investigating cold fusion, not a few of them in other countries including Japan and India, but also including the US Navy

Sam Smith, Progressive Review, 1992 - You may recall the flurry of stories three years ago about that miracle of physics, cold fusion, that turned out, we were told, to be a flop, if not a scientific fraud. That's where the American media left us, but in the process may be missing one of the biggest stories of our time.

Despite an American media blackout on the subject, there are at present some 200 scientists around the world actively studying cold fusion. The Electric Power Research Institute in Palo Alto, Calif., which does research for the electric utilities, has spent \$2 million on cold fusion research since 1989 and budgeted another \$3 million to be spent in 1992.

On January 27, top cold fusion researchers gathered in Nagoya, Japan, to bear a series of reports on cold fusion projects. Major Japanese newspaper covered the event.

The Japanese, it is estimated, are spending \$10-\$15 million a year on cold fusion research and the leading journal Bungeishunju says that cold fusion "is no longer open to discussion. Cold fusion experiments and replication left those levels of doubt a long time ago, and entered a more concrete stage of development. Anyone who still says, 'such nonsense, it can't be!' is simply not looking at reality.

Meanwhile, in the United States, no federal or state money is being spent on cold fusion and as recently as last November The Washington Post ran a review by the director of the American Physical Society that attacked the cold fusionists with less than scientific reserve:

"If everyone knows it is wrong, why are they doing it? Inept scientists whose reputations would be tarnished, greedy administrators.... gullible politicians who had squandered the taxpayers' dollars, lazy journalists... - all had an interest in making it appear that the issue had not been settled. Their easy corruption was one of the most chilling aspects of this sad comedy. To be sure, there are true believers among the cold-fusion acolytes, just as there are sincere scientists who believe in psychokinesis, flying saucers, creationism and the Chicago Cubs. A Phd in sciences is not inoculation against foolishness. - or mendacity."

When Jed Rothwell, who heads Cold Fusion Research Advocates, asked the editor of Scientific American why his journal had not covered the cold fusion story, he described it as "pathological science" with no merit whatsoever.

Yet the Japanese version of the same publication ran a two-page story in March. And the signers of a petition to Congress to hold hearings on the matter include the names of a Nobel Laureate in physics; scientists from MIT, Los Alamos, Oak Ridge, Tufts, the US Army, Rockwell, Dow, and Motorola; the chair of the atomic energy commission of India, and leading scientists in Japan, China and Russia.

Will cold fusion pan out? Who knows? But the indifference of the media, Congress and the Bush administration to an idea that is being treated seriously in as serious a country as Japan, that even has attracted the attention of the American utility industry, seems strange at best. At worst, it could provide highly dramatic evidence that America's genius for invention and discovery is well on the wane.

Proeeting gressive Review, 2004 - At the March of the American Physical Society there will be 14 papers delivered in a session on cold fusion. This isn't the first time there has been such a session, and cold fusion has also been considered a respectable subject at the American Chemical Society. Reports cold fusion advocate Ed Wall, "They have been presenting at APS for a number of years, as well as the American Chemical Society. They generally do not generate much of a turnout, but because the scientists doing the CF research are in good standing in such organizations, and the methods employed are standard stuff and quality of the work they do appears to be good, they were able to argue (that they should be allowed to present their work."

There is one place, however, where cold fusion is not permitted to be discussed or debated: the American press. Says Wall: "Once CF started getting treated as a serious science, not just by a strong-willed minority of appropriately credentialed scientists, but by scientific and engineering establishments around the world (Japan), it appeared as more than bizarre that it was still considered heresy in the US."

Cold fusion is far from the first new scientific idea to get the cold shoulder both from scientists, the establishment and the media. Galileo's problems are well known but in a Nobel Laureates talk last June titled "Pathological Disbelief," Brian D. Josephson, a physicist from the University of Cambridge Lecture, gave some other examples.

Cold Confusion

New Energy Times - Low energy nuclear reaction research investigates a possible new form of clean nuclear energy and nuclear transmutations. This subject was formerly called cold fusion. LENR does not produce greenhouse gases, strong prompt radiation or long-lived radioactive wastes. The fuel is deuterium or hydrogen, which is abundantly available in ocean water. The dominant reaction product is helium-4, which is harmless.

