

M. J. McDONOUGH is Vice President for Electric Utility Marketing of the Westinghouse Electric Corporation.



NUCLEAR POWER: AN ACTIVE CHALLENGING BUSINESS



Many college students today are not so much against business as against the boredom they associate with business. Unfortunately, their dominant attitude seems to be that business in general is all conformity, dullness, and stolidity. Words like "I'm concerned with doing something significant" are literally echoing from campuses across the country and are frequently spoken by the most talented students, the most likely leaders of tomorrow.

Oddly enough these words lead us to a paradox, for even the simplest analysis leads logically to the conclusion that in the operations of business is the key to significant contribution to the human welfare. Commendable concern with hunger, poverty, ignorance, and chronic ill health will not be eliminated by eloquence, philosophic analysis, or random effort from small groups of well-meaning people.

The nuclear business is a powerful force, with the resources, the manpower, and the direction to get very big jobs done. Nuclear power and business in general have created an abundance which for the first time in man's history makes the elimination of poverty feasible. It is a positive force which can be employed effectively to improve the welfare of mankind, eliminating many of our physical and social problems.

These are exciting times, and college students today will watch the world change radically in their lifetime. They will have ready access to the accumulated knowledge of the past in a manner far superior to any that has existed before their time. The electrical industry has become the atomic industry. Important things are happening in it. Where the action is—in space, underseas, in power generation, in industry (construction), communications—wherever man is making important progress, some branch of the electric industry has an important role in it.

Electrical energy, generated by nuclear plants, can solve the traffic congestion problem and much of the air pollution problem by electric transit systems that are fast, quiet, comfortable, and convenient—unsnarling the bumper-to-bumper traffic which threatens to make Main Street, America, one long parking lot—and offering smooth, rapid, longer range transport between cities merging into the seaboard megalopolis. Electric power has the potential to whisk away the exhaust fumes which apparently are contributing substantially to air pollution. An effort is being made right now to create the power source that will make electric vehicles feasible for general transportation.

Electricity can attack the other scourges. For example, rubbish and garbage can now be disposed of by an electrified plant. In addition, fresh water is being made from the sea. Recently, a water plant producing 2 620 000 gallons of fresh water per day was dedicated at Key West, Florida. A version of the Key West plant could be incorporated into a system that would eventually solve both the water supply and water pollution problems.

A forerunner of similar plants in the near future is a large combination plant for nuclear power and water conversion—a bold unique effort by Southern California Edison, San Diego Gas and Electric, the City of Los Angeles, and the Metropolitan Water District, with some Federal aid.

The list is inexhaustible. However, the areas mentioned are basic to growing human needs, and it is my belief that the electric business is best qualified to help solve these vital problems facing the world and its expanding population. How well these jobs will ultimately be done depends partly on enlisting the most talented and able young leaders.

I don't think it will be a problem if we can just get these young leaders to understand fully the magnificent nature of the forces available to them in business and to expand their horizons to encompass fully all of the great opportunities that we have for making our existence better than ever before on this earth. I think we have bold new projects in the nuclear electrical industry conceived to meet urgent human needs. The young people of today can join in its adventure, experience its excitement, suspense, challenges, and triumphs, solve its problems, and share in its rewards.