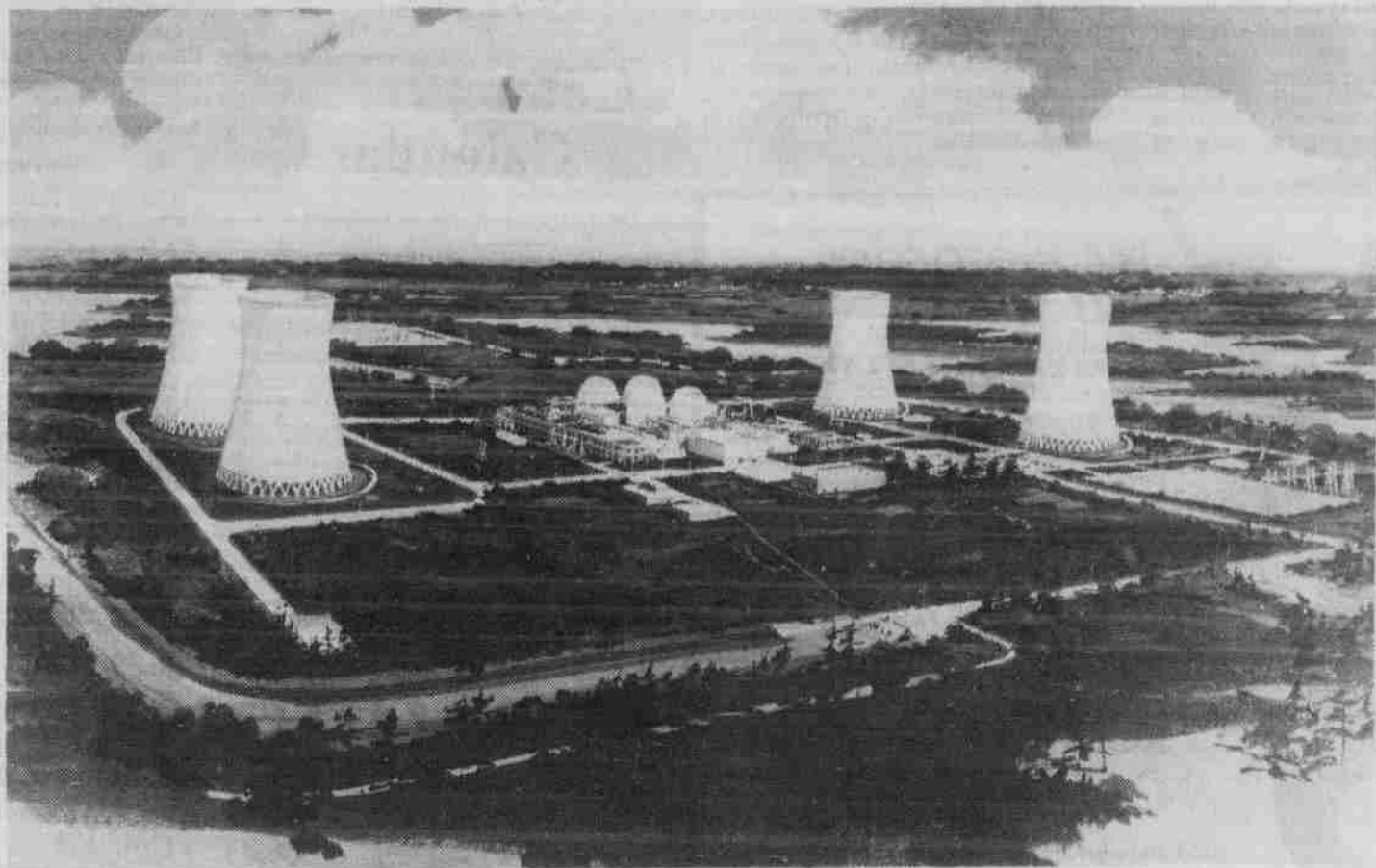


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Utilities, environmentalists square off, nuclear battle comes to Carolinas



Nuclear power debate

by Dave McKinnon

A recent spate of controversies involving nuclear power plants in North and South Carolina has focused local attention on a national debate over nuclear power which will have a profound impact on energy policy in the United States for at least the next two decades. Some opponents of current nuclear policy would add that the debate could have a drastic effect on the lives and health of the American people as well.

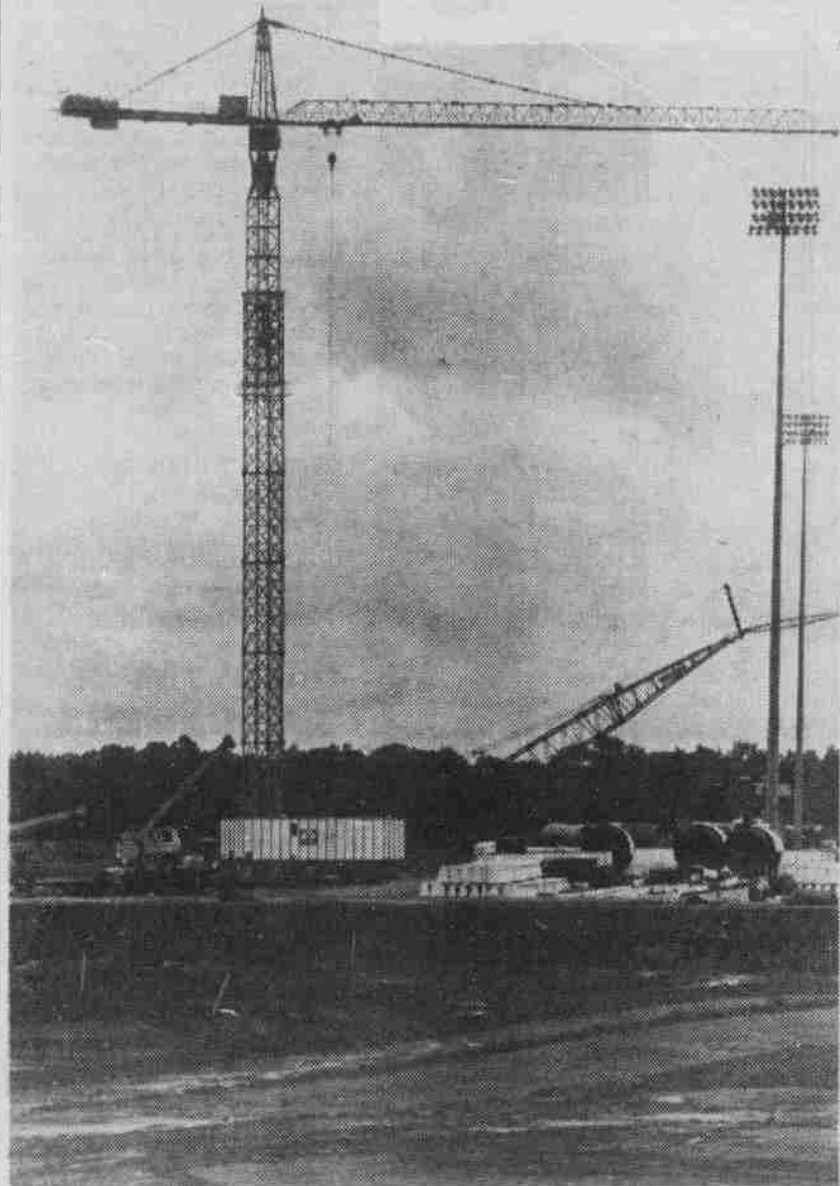
The Nuclear Regulatory Agency, created by Congress just three years ago to replace the Atomic Energy Commission, has come in for increasing criticism from both supporters and opponents of nuclear power in the last year. Supporters now argue that the commission has become too strict in its regulations. Enemies of nuclear power contend on the other hand that safety requirements remain inadequate.

The commission now regulates the 69 reactors in operation in the U.S. and licenses new facilities. 10 percent of the nation's electricity is currently produced by nuclear reactors. It is estimated that 110-130 such power plants will be in use by 1985.

The Atomic Industrial Forum, an industry lobbying organization, recently charged that the NRC's present course in licensing and operating regulations may bring the financial feasibility of future reactors into serious question.

But the Union of Concerned Scientists, a public-interest lobby, has argued for even more stringent regulations covering safety and health in a number of areas. A moratorium on nuclear power plant construction has been passed by referendum in California and is currently being urged for other states by a number of public affairs organizations across the nation. Local opposition to present nuclear power policy has come from the Conservation

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