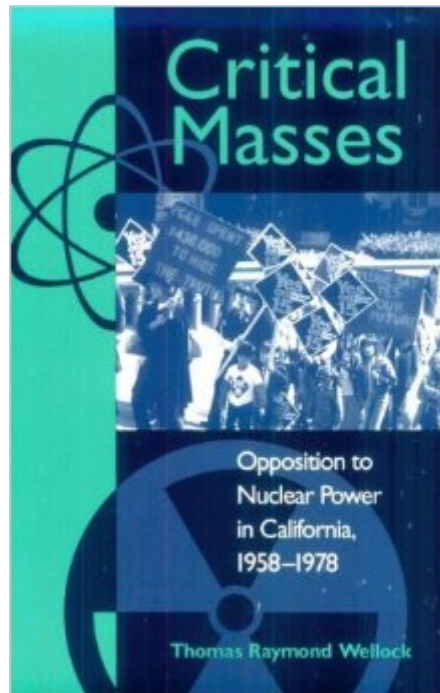


The book was found

Critical Masses : Opposition To Nuclear Power In California, 1958-1978



Synopsis

Using first hand testimony this text tells how the citizens of California - from the tiny town of Wasco in the Central Valley to the vast suburbs of Los Angeles - challenged the threat of nuclear power and transformed the anti-nuclear movement in the years between 1958 to 1978.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Wellock has not left a page unscrutinized in this very readable, exhaustively thorough story of the origins and the rise of the anti-nuclear power movement in the U.S. and the colorful characters who pioneered it. Wellock's easy writing style surmounts the usual university pedantic requirement for more pages of footnotes than of analysis. It feels as though Wellock began with a nuclear engineer's distaste for the anti-nuclear activists but slowly came 'round to genuine respect for them. A fascinating account.

Wellock's book is a thoroughly readable book on the social history of nuclear power in California. His approach is to focus on the social critique of nuclear power instead of the usual managerial and economic post-mortems of nuclear power in the US. California is an extremely interesting case, because there was good reason for nuclear power in a state with breakneck growth and little coal reserves. The policies that grew out of California's anti-nuclear movement ended up changing the face of energy policy for the country as a whole (California keeps its status as a political bellwether

for the rest of the US). Amazing that a book about nuclear power can be so arresting - I read it while in the British Virgin Islands - surely a place with better things to do, right?

Why did I give a book that is arguably the first of its kind to recount the grassroots movement against nuclear power in California only 2 stars? The subject matter of this book is critical to understanding the development and decline of nuclear power in California, and the United States, and it is full of obviously well-researched information that must have taken countless hours of interviews and archival excavation to unearth. However, it is also full of spelling and grammatical errors of the most pedestrian variety; mistakes so simple yet so rife within the text that at times it is difficult to decipher the author's meaning. Lest you think I have some vendetta against the author, here is one of several examples I found on pages 194-195: "McCarthy and Varanini knew it was crucial and deadly amendment for Sundesert." Sounds like caveman talk; shouldn't it be "a crucial"? And therein lies the problem: this book, in terms of its illumination of the incredibly complex, multifaceted antinuclear movement taking place at all levels, both on the ground and in the government, in California from the late-1950s through the 1970s, is fantastic. But the regular (and I do mean regular) mistakes in both spelling and grammatical terms take away from the aim of the book by bogging down the reader in trying to glean what, exactly, the author is trying to convey. This may very well be the editor's fault, but if I was an author and I saw my work go to press with a frankly grade-school level of errors, I would be absolutely furious. The occasionally disjointed progression of the story also detracts from the overall feeling, though perhaps the author intends to use this organizational sprawl as a literary device to symbolize the disjointed progression of the antinuclear movement itself. I certainly hope that is the case. This book does successfully chart the path of the antinuclear movement in California, but the spelling errors and awkward flow detract from what is otherwise an undoubtedly informative piece of literature. I would love to see a second edition with these sub-par mistakes ironed out, as I believe this would create a work that would reach a considerably wider audience and would be a truly worthwhile read. As it stands, though, it is the kind of quandary that any book-lover will detest: a truly relevant book with a great plot and great characters that is at times so difficult to read as to put the reader off. On my third and final try I managed to at long last successfully finish this book, and while I feel I better understand the antinuclear movement I have gone through far too many red marking pens.

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