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Anyone Want to Help Build a Reactor?

By *MATTHEW L. WALD*

A partnership between Constellation Energy and Electricité de France to build a new reactor in Maryland has [broken up](#), with Constellation concluding that the economics are unfavorable because of electricity market conditions and the terms demanded by the Energy Department for a loan guarantee.

But Electricité de France wants to go forward and has bought out Constellation's share of the joint venture, [Unistar Nuclear](#). The problem is that American law requires that the plant have an American partner as a majority owner. Whom could the company recruit?

One possibility would be to give up on the site that it was pursuing with Constellation, the Calvert Cliffs complex in Maryland, about 50 miles south of Washington, and team up with another utility that had plans to build.

There are two in that category, but neither seems ready to jump at the chance.

One is PSEG, the parent company of Public Service Electric & Gas of New Jersey, which operates three reactors in the southern part of the state and is considering a fourth. It has asked the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to [approve the site](#).

"We've always said that our site is very possibly the best, most suitable plant for an nuclear plant in the United States," said Paul Rosengren, a spokesman for the company. It is in an area of low-population density but close to load, grid-wise, and has cooling water, he said.

But the utility is not in a hurry, Mr. Rosengren continued. "Let's get the site done and then we'll look for a design," he said. "We are not in the first wave."

In Virginia, Dominion is also planning a new reactor that would be adjacent to the two it already runs on Lake Anna. But on Friday, Thomas F. Farrell 2nd, the company chairman, told financial analysts, "We have concluded that the capital required for other new generation, pending environmental compliance and electric transmission upgrades requires us to slow development of the third reactor at this facility."

It was not imminent anyway; earlier this year the company said it wanted to have the plant in service in 2019.

The company will "continue to work toward obtaining construction and operating license," Mr. Farrell said. But it is planning to use a different design, by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries.

Meanwhile, Dominion has a new plant fired by a combination of coal and biomass, and a

combined cycle gas-fired plant in the works. “We have a lot of things in the pipeline,” said Chet Wade, a spokesman.

Another possibility for EDF would be to seek a change in the law, to allow foreign ownership of a nuclear reactor. (That rule dates from the cold war days.) But on Friday, the chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Gregory Jaczko, was noncommittal when asked what he thought of this idea.

The commission’s job, he said, is to enforce the law, and “I’m not aware of any proposals in Congress” for changes.