



Alvin W. Vogtle Returns

I've been rolling over in my grave. I'm so upset by the chicanery surrounding the nuclear facility that was supposed to honor my name. I'm still ashamed and embarrassed about how my successors built the first phase. It was the construction problems back in the 1970s and 1980s that caused the company to become mafia-like in its behavior and imbedded the corruption and prevarication that continues to this day. Georgia Power tried to crush whistle-blowers and critics, engaged in cover-ups and the use of slick rationalizations as well as cutting backroom political deals.

Sure, like all regulated companies, we had graft and corruption back when I was CEO of Southern Company. We had to do favors for powerful politicians and engage in lobbying. But these actions were defensive in nature. We just needed to keep the politicians off our backs so we could run a business. Our business strategy back then was not entirely centered on manipulation of utility regulators, the buying of state legislators and the lobbying for favorable federal treatment. Our investments and programs made economic sense on their own instead of based on profit-seeking through political manipulation and gaming of the regulatory system.

I was the one that, following Southern Company's financial problems in the 1970s, pulled the plug on the proposed Vogtle units 3 and 4. I probably would have cancelled units 1 and 2 if Georgia Power's management hadn't been fudging the numbers. I made tough decisions, unlike the train of soft, pasty men who followed me as head of Southern Company.

The slogan of the utility industry in the 1970's was nuclear power was "too cheap to meter." Now we know the slogan should be "too stupid to build."

If nuclear power is so clean, why does it depend on dirty politics? If nuclear power is so safe, why does it require limits on liability? If nuclear power is such a good investment, why does it require pre-payment from customers?

Will my name be remembered for my war-time escapades that were the inspiration for the Steve McQueen character in The Great Escape? No! My name instead will forever be associated with false promises, excuse making and gross mismanagement. The facility bearing my name is a monument to the triumph of crony capitalism over sound business principles. What a legacy.

Jim Clarkson
www.rsmenergy.com