

ISRAEL

READING POWER STATION MAY REOPEN

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[Article by Hayim Handoerker, HA'ARETZ Correspondent in Tel Aviv]

[Text] The ministerial committee for economic affairs is scheduled to meet today to discuss and approve the proposal of Energy Minister Moshe Shahal on reopening the Reading III power station in northern Tel Aviv, against the decision of the previous government and without having the matter examined by the planning and environmental authorities concerned. This plan is causing a furor among various sources in the Ministry of the Interior, the Tel Aviv City Hall, and environmental protection people.

According to the plan, which was proposed by the Electric Company and endorsed by the energy minister, two gas turbines will be installed at the Reading III power station; each turbine will be capable of producing 50 megawatts of electrical power. Although these turbines do not cause environmental pollution, they make the noise of two jet airplanes. The house closest to Reading III, near the Exhibition Grounds in Tel Aviv, is located at a distance of 150 meters from the station.

It was revealed that Minister Shahal decided not to issue the approval of the plan through the competent planning authorities, which are examining its ecological implications, but chose to yield the bill on Reading IV, which allows the government to open additional power units by a cabinet decision, circumventing the customary examination procedures.

Sources involved in the matter criticized the decision and said that the power station should be moved outside the city. Although it is planned for emergencies only, it is the Electric Company who decides, according to its needs, what constitutes an emergency, as it is the inhabitants of northern Tel Aviv who will have to endure the noise.

It also emerged that the effect of the turbines on the vicinity was not professionally tested, except for an environmental study done by the Electric Company which, as is known, is an interested party.

It has been learned that Interior Minister Yitzhaq Peretz will oppose the plan of the energy ministry at the meeting of the ministerial committee.

The Energy Ministry spokesman, Avishay Amir, said in reply that the Reading III power station will be in operation a very small number of hours a year and that its purpose is for emergencies. Should a breakdown occur at Reading IV, Reading III will help out. The inhabitants will not be bothered by smells because gas does not pollute, and as for noise, the station will work only a few hours a year.

The spokesman added that the construction of a new power station to replace Reading III will cost a lot of money and will require lengthy approval proceedings. Even if it is decided to submit the installation of the turbines to the various planning committees, it will take years, "and we do not have the time to wait. We are not putting the plan through the normal procedures because we fear procrastination."

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