



Shippingport Atomic Power Station at Shippingport, PA, which began operation in 1957, was the Nation's first full-scale nuclear generating station.
Source: U.S. Department of Energy

constructed, and operated the power reactors. The Commission provided some funding and other assistance as required.³⁰

By 1962 fifty-three power reactors were either being designed or under construction in the United States. President John F. Kennedy requested the Atomic Energy Commission, in cooperation with the Federal Power Commission and the Department of Interior, to take "a new and hard look at the role of nuclear power" in view of the Nation's energy needs and resources. The Commission's report concluded that light water nuclear reactors were "on the threshold of economic competitiveness" and with only moderate government assistance could cross the economic threshold into "widespread acceptance by the utility industry." The Commission nonetheless expressed concern about the long-term outlook due to a perceived future shortage of uranium. The Commission recommended that extensive research and development efforts be directed toward breeder reactors that would

produce more fuel than they would consume. "Only by the use of breeders," the Commission declared, could the United States "really solve the problem of adequate energy supply for future generations."³¹

A year later the Commission's assumption that light water reactors were on the verge of commercialization appeared realized when the Jersey Central Power and Light company announced the purchase of a 515-megawatt plant from General Electric to be built at Oyster Creek, New Jersey. The plant was the first nuclear power plant selected on purely economic grounds without government aid and in direct competition with a conventional facility. A rapid growth in nuclear power—known as the "Great Bandwagon Market"—soon developed. Within four years of the Oyster Creek announcement, utilities ordered seventy-five central station nuclear power plants with a net total capacity of over 45,000 megawatts of electricity.