

It's What They Don't Tell You

President Obama's Blue Ribbon Commission on "America's Nuclear Future" was held in Albuquerque on January 28, 2011. The obvious bias of the Commission members for promotion of nuclear power rather than a future for alternative energy is disappointing.

Bringing high radioactive level waste or spent fuel to New Mexico, which is the eighth poorest state in the United States with a large low income, minority population will probably be attempted despite decades of widespread public opposition, environmental justice concerns and widespread radioactive contamination.

The Commission allotted a two minute time period for public comment. That provided a pretense of public involvement to allow predetermined decisions made by powerful corporate and political interests that favor nuclear power development to go forward. The early start and early termination of the public comment period in Albuquerque was unnecessary and indicated poor judgment by the Department of Energy (DOE) moderator.

The DOE and nuclear industry boosters are grossly out of touch with the public desire, both in the United States and internationally, for alternative and sustainable safe and sane energy policies that can provide greater peace and prosperity in the world.

Because of the perceived success of the Carlsbad, New Mexico Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP), WIPP is currently under consideration for high level waste disposal despite the conflicting use of the area for extensive petroleum and mining interests. New Mexicans were told if we took the non-high level radioactive waste from the military, then high level reactor waste would not be brought to New Mexico.

Nuclear power and the problems associated with the high level reactor waste disposal do not meet the need for safe energy policies. Instead, DOE and the nuclear industry offer programs that fail to consider the significant environmental, political and economic obstacles. Nuclear energy production creates unsolved problems like transportation of waste and potential accidents that can kill or injure thousands and contaminate large areas.

The DOE is an abysmal failure at locating a disposal site, managing spent fuel and the recycling (reprocessing) option of wastes. The Yucca Mountain site proved to be both a technological failure for choice of location and a political failure that cost the taxpayer \$15,000,000,000 (Albuquerque Journal statistic).

There is no technology that DOE possesses to prevent massive environmental contamination from reprocessing the spent fuel to recover the uranium and plutonium.

The historical record for past and current reprocessing of reactor waste shows the United States, Europe, Russia and Japan have released huge quantities of radionuclides to the

environment. Sellafield (UK) and La Hague (France) have released 32 times more radiation than the quantities released from all atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons.

La Hague and Sellafield's radioactive contamination of the ocean reaches all the way to the Arctic seas contaminating fish and shellfish. Seaweed used for fertilizer is putting radionuclides into the food chain. Childhood leukemia shows evidence of significant increase. Iodine-129 has a half-life of 16,000,000 years and can cause thyroid cancer. An accidental release from the liquid waste inventory at Sellafield could dwarf the Chernobyl accident by 50 times just for Cesium alone. Hundreds of kilos of plutonium contaminate the Irish sea.

Tens of thousands of trips will be necessary to transport nuclear waste from utility reactors to a central repository. Containers used to transport high level nuclear waste are subject to a massive car bomb or a hand held missile attack. A terrorist attack on such containers in the midst of a major urban area would cause death, injury, illness, wreak economic havoc, generate enormous cleanup costs and contaminate a large area for future livability.

The decision, to allow interim storage at reactor sites or high level waste deposition in Carlsbad or elsewhere in the nation, demands widespread awareness of the issues involved. The issues go beyond a two minute comment in a meeting that had the goal of hiding facts from the public.

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