



UNITED STATES  
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555

5/30/84

To: RE: Browning  
Encl. attached several  
recent items commenting  
on BWIP.

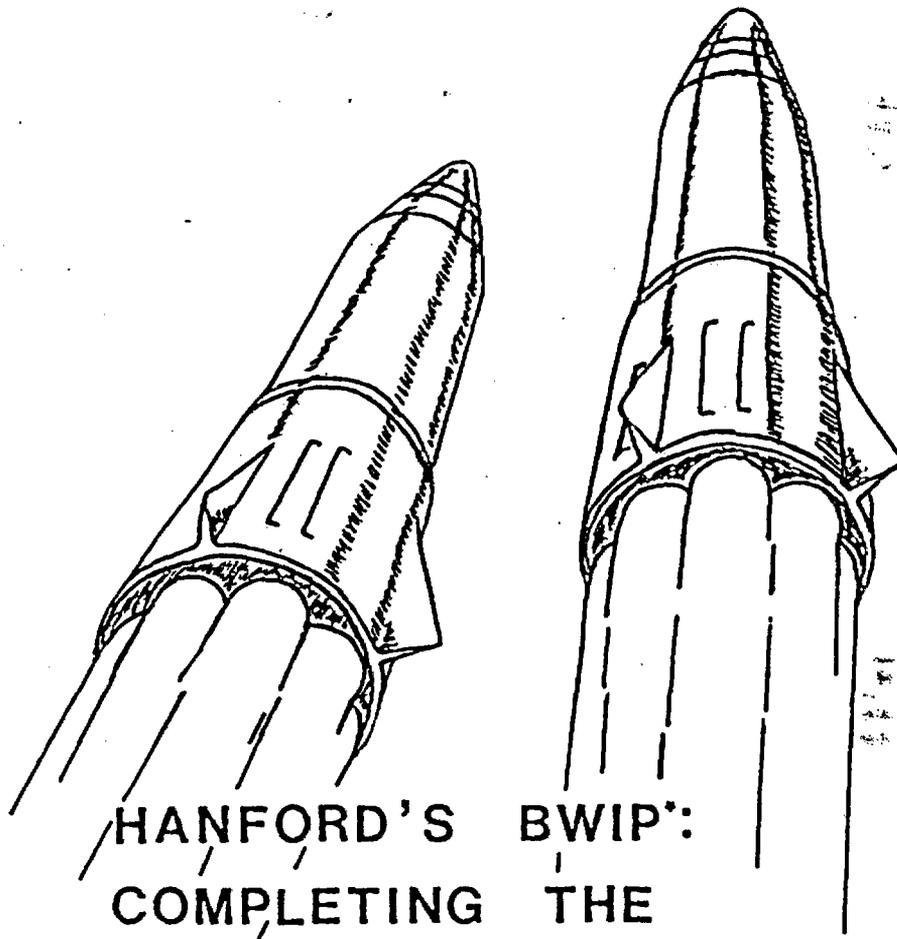
The item on the relationship  
of weapons in the past  
time I've seen that issue  
missed by any local group.

JH Cook

- attch: 1. Hanford BWIP: Completing The  
Nuclear Weapons Connection
- 2. High-Level Nuclear Waste  
Dump for Washington State
- 3. Morning Edition Commentary -  
FFAI Radio Editorial

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PDR WASTE	
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## HANFORD'S BWIP\*: COMPLETING THE NUCLEAR WEAPONS CONNECTION

At Washington's Hanford Nuclear Reservation, in the southeastern part of the state, the United States Department of Energy/United States Department of Defense (DOE/DoD), defying historical precedence that has kept the peaceful atom separate from the military atom, is busily preparing to extract weapons-grade plutonium (Pu239) from the nation's "Atoms for Peace" program, e.g., the commercial nuclear power industry, for use in nuclear-weapons manufacturing. Only two things presently thwart completion of these plans:

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\* Basalt Waste Isolation Project--a deep geological high-level nuclear waste dump proposed under the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982 for Hanford, Washington.

- (1) The DOE/DoD doesn't yet have the necessary commercial spent nuclear fuel at hand on the Hanford Nuclear Reservation and,
- (2) The U.S. Congress has precluded--through the Hart-Simpson Amendment to the Atomic Energy Reauthorizing Act of 1982--the military reprocessing of commercial spent nuclear fuel.

That, however, has not stopped the DOE/DoD from positioning the Hanford Reservation for ultimately reprocessing spent commercial fuel. The two departments are striving mightily to see that the necessary processes and materials will be available on the Reservation when needed, while patiently awaiting an opportune time for reversing the precluding legislation.

The reason for this new nuclear imperative is quite simple. With the ending of U.S.-Soviet accommodation--detente--in the late '70s and the resumption--with a vengeance--of the nuclear-arms race, the materials-production capacity of DOE/DoD's aging military facilities have proved not enough to sate the voracious appetite of the "Free-World" for nuclear weaponry.

Acquisition of enough plutonium for the approximately 14,000 new warheads required for the MX missile, the Trident D-5 missile, the air-, sea-, and ground-launched Cruise missile, the "enhanced radiation weapon," the Pershing 2 missile, the "Midgetman" missile, etc., etc., etc., *ad infinitum, ad nauseum*, in the early '90s and beyond, requires more capacity than presently available. The DOE/DoD is thus presented with a major problem; they can build the necessary military facilities to meet the increased demand--a very, very costly and time-consuming proposition--or, they can "supplement" the present military capacity by appropriating and reprocessing the enormous stock of spent nuclear fuel filling the storage basins at commercial nuclear power-plants--a quicker and less costly route.

While paying lip service, publicly, to the first proposition, the Administration and the DOE/DoD combine appear to be seriously pursuing only the latter course.

At Hanford, this latter strategy has been strikingly apparent. Since the onset of the new Cold War, millions-of-dollars have been poured into the N-Reactor for updating and conversion to the weapons-grade mode of operation, while at least \$140 million has been spent refurbishing the aging PUREX reprocessing plant (PUREX is a bureaucratic acronym for Plutonium URanium EXtraction, a chemical process that separates plutonium and "unburned" uranium from the other materials in irradiated spent fuel). Additionally, about \$30 million has been expended in construction of 1,000,000 gallon, double-walled, temporary storage tanks that will be used for high-level wastes resulting from PUREX's renewed operation.

Not as apparent as this refurbishing and updating are two processes that definitively confirm DOE/DoD's plans--although they staunchly deny it--to reprocess spent commercial nuclear fuel at Hanford. The Facility Modification Project (FMP) will give PUREX the physical and chemical ability to reprocess such fuel and the Special Isotope Separation/Laser Isotope Separation (SIS/LIS) process, developed by nuclear-weaponeers at Lawrence Berkeley Laboratories for Hanford, uses laser technology to separate weapons-grade plutonium easily and inexpensively from the plethora of unwanted and "messy" plutonium isotopes present in PUREX-reprocessed spent commercial nuclear fuel.

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The DOE/DoD has created the physical plant and the scientific processes at Hanford capable--when the Hart-Simpson Amendment can be overturned--of reprocessing commercial spent fuel for use in the continuing and insane nuclear-arms race. Only a centrally-located storage site from which spent power-reactor fuel can be retrieved is still lacking at the Reservation, and the DOE/DoD has been--and still is--assiduously working behind the scenes to assure a safe haven for this commercial fuel at Hanford.

The enactment into law of the Nuclear Waste Policy Act (NWPA) in early 1983, was the legislative culmination of DOE/DoD's assiduous toil to site a nuclear-waste depot at Hanford. The Act not only relieved nuclear-power utilities of responsibility for their nuclear garbage, i.e., spent nuclear fuel, it also mandated that DOE/DoD take legal possession and provide (a) repositories for high-level nuclear waste and spent nuclear fuel; (b) limited, interim, away-from-reactor (AFR) storage for spent nuclear fuel; and, (c) as an addition and/or option to (a) above, monitored retrievable storage (MRS) facilities for all this commercial-generated nuclear garbage. Additionally, NWPA stipulated that, indirectly, the electrical ratepayer and/or the national taxpayer would finance--at the discretion of the Secretary of DOE--the total cost of the program. In return for this "public largess," NWPA conceded a citizen veto--subject to a two-house Congressional override--of facility siting within each state.

More importantly to DOE/DoD, the NWPA sanctioned and "grandfathered" their past political and scientific machinations to close the commercial nuclear-weapons connection at Hanford with a nuclear dump site. These efforts, begun on a leisurely timetable in the '50s, had, by the late '70s and early '80s, been given extreme urgency by the fast-filling storage basins of the nuclear utilities, supplemented by the cries of the profit-seeking nuclear corporations and the screams of the nation's nuclear warriors.

The Basalt Waste Isolation Project (BWIP), initiated on the Hanford Reservation in earnest by DOE's Office of Nuclear Waste Isolation (ONWI) in 1976, proposed to locate a high-level nuclear waste dump deep within the massive basaltic layers underneath the Reservation. Relying on the ability of their political "sugar-daddies" to overcome any impediment to Hanford's selection and the subsequent fact that the NWPA's "fast track" schedule literally guaranteed that Hanford would be a "shoo-in" as the country's first nuclear dump, the Hanford contractor, Rockwell International, idly frittered-away hundreds-of-millions-of-dollars before their sham was exposed. First, in 1980, one of the most powerful Senatorial champions of Hanford, Warren G. Magnuson, was upset at the polls; then, surprisingly, the Nuclear Waste Policy Act, requiring that each proposed repository site meet specific criteria, was enacted; and, lastly, the final politician of Washington State's "gold-dust twins," Henry M. Jackson, succumbed of a sudden heart attack. With DOE's political fortunes at Hanford in shambles, the requirements of the NWPA revealed the Rockwell site investigations for what they were, totally inadequate and scientifically worthless. Both the Environmental Assessment (EA) and the Site Characterization Report (SCR)--mandated by NWPA and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)--released by Rockwell, have been discredited and, for the time being, DOE/DoD's "fast-track" plans for completing the commercial nuclear-weapons connection at Hanford have been stymied.

Despite these setbacks, DOE/DoD still has its eye on the Hanford Site. With all the other facilities capable of commercial reprocessing for nuclear-weaponry located there, the two Departments are not going to

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abandon Hanford unless the public vigorously exercises their participatory rights granted by the NWPA. The Act gives affected states the right to take part in site evaluation and selection, including the veto power of any federal decision on a permanent waste site.

With over 16,000 million equivalent TNT tons of nuclear weaponry stashed in every corner of the globe--enough nuclear weapons to totally pulverize the earth many, many times over--the Hanford Oversight Committee believes DOE/DoD's attempts to site a high-level nuclear waste dump at Hanford is the height of nuclear folly and poses a serious threat to world peace. We also believe we can stop this insanity by united citizen action. If state governors and state legislators hear a voice of opposition to this madness, they will have no choice but to object to a dump at Hanford. If state Congressional delegations hear opposition to this scheme, they too will have to object. If, on the other hand, we remain passive, Hanford will undoubtedly be chosen as the repository site.

You can help stop this nuclear-armaments' madness by:

- Calling or writing your State and National Legislators and your respective Governors.
- Attending hearings per the NWPA timetable and *Federal Register* notices. You can present testimony, if previously arranged, or submit your viewpoints in writing. Your presence at meetings can make a difference even if you choose not to participate.
- Support the Hanford Oversight Committee with a tax deductible donation:

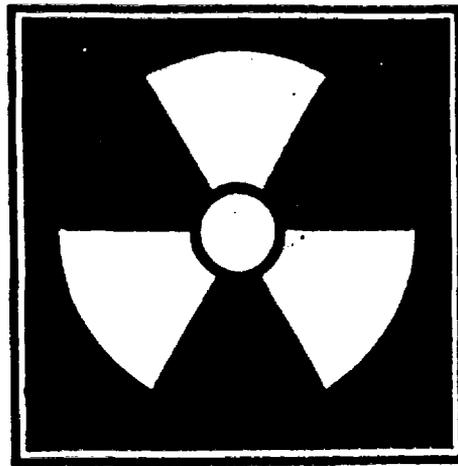
Hanford Oversight Committee )  
814 N.E. 40th Street ) Western  
Seattle, Washington 98105 ) Washington

Hanford Oversight Committee )  
1449 Thayer Drive ) Eastern  
Richland, Washington 99352 ) Washington

Hanford Oversight Committee )  
P.O. Box 4212 ) Oregon  
Portland, Oregon 97201 )

If you desire more information on how you can help, please write us. We need you.

**A HIGH-LEVEL  
NUCLEAR WASTE  
DUMP FOR  
WASHINGTON  
STATE**



**PUTTING  
THE REGION  
AT RISK**

## THE DANGERS OF RADIOACTIVE WASTES IN WASHINGTON

Do you know that the Hanford Reservation is now being considered as the permanent waste dump for the most dangerous radioactive wastes in the country? Since Hanford has served as a temporary waste dump--mainly for low-level radioactive wastes--the Federal Government views the Reservation as a good political choice. But Hanford is not a good geological choice. Dumping dangerous high-level wastes at the Reservation could prove to be a fatal mistake. If radioactive wastes are buried in an unsuitable geological site, they will eventually contaminate the Columbia River and concentrate in the food chain. We will literally eat, drink and breathe radiation.

The residents of Washington State have lived with a constant radiation threat for 40 years--in the form of radioactive releases into the air, ground and water at Hanford. Often these accidents are not made public. In 1954, radioactive gases were released, contaminating the air more than 100 miles past Spokane, Washington. Other releases of radiation have contaminated the soil of the entire 600 square mile Reservation. Since 1956, 500,000 gallons of nuclear wastes have leaked from storage tanks. Most of these incidents involved low-level radioactive wastes. It is frightening to imagine such carelessness in the handling of high-level wastes.

## THE NUCLEAR WASTE POLICY ACT OF 1982

Nuclear wastes are increasing daily. It is estimated that by the year 2000 nuclear power plants alone will have generated 77,000 metric tons of radioactive waste. Disposal of high-level wastes has proven to be a complex problem, so these wastes are temporarily stored at nuclear power plants or at federally designated sites such as Hanford.

Recognizing the need for permanent waste disposal of high-level nuclear wastes, Congress passed the Nuclear Waste Policy Act (NWPA) in January, 1982. This Act establishes the Department of Energy (DOE) as the lead agency in the decision-making process. It is the responsibility of DOE to establish guidelines for choosing the permanent waste site. The Act sets a deadline of January 7, 1985 for nomination by the DOE of three potential sites for disposal of non-military wastes, followed by detailed environmental impact statements on each site. By March 31, 1987, the President will recommend the first site for high-level nuclear waste disposal to Congress. The governor or state legislature of the affected state may veto the decision within 60 days--and the veto can only be overturned by both houses of Congress.

## WHY HANFORD?

The top candidate for permanent nuclear waste storage appears to be the Hanford Reservation in Eastern Washington. Site studies of the basalt rock formation at Hanford were started as early as 1978, before the NWPA was signed into law. The DOE has already released a Site Characterization Report and a Draft Environmental Assessment on Hanford. Due to inaccurate data, both of these reports have been discredited, and are now being revised.

The government has stored nuclear wastes at Hanford since World War II. Since this site is located on a federal energy reservation historically dedicated to nuclear defense and energy activities, the DOE views Hanford as an adequate location for a permanent waste dump. The DOE recently announced that it will also prepare an Environmental Impact Statement on the storage of high-level military wastes at Hanford. In addition, a factory which reprocesses plutonium for use in nuclear bombs is scheduled to resume operation on the Reservation by early 1984.

Some residents of the Tri-Cities area view the development of Hanford as a boost to the failing economy. Hanford would create jobs--but would not promise steady employment. Employees could become victims of just another boom and bust cycle. DOE estimates on employment are constantly changing. In a booklet published in 1982, the DOE estimated a total of 5,000 construction jobs and 1,100 operations jobs for the nuclear waste dump. A booklet issued in 1983 reduced this number to 600 construction jobs and 950 operations jobs. Yet, Tri-Cities politicians hear the cry for jobs and are pushing for Hanford in Washington, D. C.

Although the DOE claims Hanford is an adequate geological site for the disposal of high-level radioactive wastes, recent findings dispute this reasoning. In fact, the Hydrology and Geology Overview Committee of the DOE suggests that:

There is only one solid justification for studying this site, and it is the socio-political fact that the land is a U. S. nuclear reservation. From a hydrological perspective, the Columbia River Basalt Group as a whole is not well-suited for a high-level waste repository.

#### IS HANFORD SUITABLE?

A United States Geological Survey (USGS) report states that the chosen nuclear waste dump should exhibit slow groundwater movement, have long groundwater flow paths to the surface, and be geologically stable in regard to earthquake activity. The Hanford site does not meet any of these criteria.

The proposed site is located approximately six miles from the Columbia River, which is a major source of water for both Washington and Oregon. The DOE estimates it would take over 13,000 years for radioactive wastes to leach into the groundwater and enter the River. Independent investigators, including the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and the USGS, estimate such lower travel times --hundreds, not thousands, of years. Some estimates are as low as twenty years. The USGS, in a report describing the geology of the Hanford site, said "overall, the system appears to be leaky." According to the NRC, the waste site should be disqualified if there is a "reasonable expectation" that the site will not contain radioactive material for at least 1,000 years. Even this requirement is lax, since some radioactive isotopes, including plutonium remain harmful over 250,000 years.

Scientists have recorded countless micro-earthquakes within six miles of the proposed dump site. These earthquakes generally register less than 2.5 on the Richter scale, but they are attributed to movement along sub-surface faults, indicating that the region is not very stable. These faults could hasten the movement of radioactive groundwater to the Columbia River. Since it is very hard to detect these faults with present geophysical techniques, the DOE has chosen to ignore this potentially serious problem.

Transportation of high-level wastes is also a concern. If Washington is chosen as a permanent waste site, the transportation of nuclear wastes into the state will increase overwhelmingly. People living along transportation routes will be exposed to radiation emitted from the casks used to contain the wastes. Accidents will undoubtedly occur. The DOE admitted that "it is certain that there will be low-level radiation exposure to people along traveled routes, due to the fact that the casks give off low levels of radiation." What amount of exposure can we expect during the transportation of high-level wastes?

#### WHAT DO WASHINGTON RESIDENTS WANT?

The citizens of Washington voiced their concern over Hanford with the overwhelming passage of Initiative 383 in 1980. That Initiative attempted to ban out-of-state nuclear wastes from Washington. The Supreme Court struck down the ban on the grounds that it pre-empted federal legislation. This logic cannot be applied to any current attempts to override Hanford as a nuclear waste dump. In fact, the 1982 Nuclear Waste Policy Act gives affected states the power to veto any federal decision on a permanent waste site. The citizens of Washington State have, therefore, the power to decide whether they want a high-level nuclear waste dump at Hanford.

The DOE is wasting our money for further research at the Hanford Site. The basalts underlying Hanford are wholly inadequate for the long-term storage of high-level nuclear wastes. We can stop this DOE insanity --but only through a united effort. If the Governor and the Washington State Legislature hear the strong voice of opposition from an informed public, they will have no choice but to veto the nomination of Hanford. If we remain passive in this cause, Hanford will undoubtedly be chosen. Only through active and steady vigilance can we continue to safeguard the health and environment of this and future generations.

#### HOW YOU CAN HELP

◆If you do nothing else, take a few minutes and call the state legislative hotline at 1-800-562-6000. This is a quick, effective way to voice your opinion. The hotline will record your concerns and contact the appropriate legislators.

◆Write the following legislators:

Governor John Spellman  
Governors Mansion  
Olympia, Washington 98504

Senator Al Williams  
Senate Energy & Utilities Committee  
101 Public Lands Building  
Olympia, Washington 98504

Rep. Dick Nelson  
House Energy & Utilities Committee  
House Office Building 205B  
Olympia, Washington 98504

• Attend scheduled hearings. You can present testimony if previously arranged, or submit your viewpoints in writing. Your presence at meetings can make a difference even if you choose not to participate.

• Become familiar with the prominent state organizations:

Department of Ecology--Heads a negotiating team responsible for protecting state interests in the site selection process.

Citizen's Nuclear Waste Advisory Board--Responsible for the state public information program.

Nuclear Waste Policy Review Board--Responsible for educating state government about its role in the site selection process.

• Support the Hanford Oversight Committee with a tax exempt donation:

Hanford Oversight Committee  
814 N.E. 40th  
Seattle, Washington 98105

} Western  
Washington

or

Hanford Oversight Committee  
1449 Thayer Drive  
Richland, Washington 99352

} Eastern  
Washington

We need your help.

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Committee from "Washington--The Ever-Glowing State"  
by The Washington Public Interest Research Group (WashPIRG)  
304G HUB, FK-10  
University of Washington  
Seattle, Washington 98195

Basically, we feel the SCR [Site Characterization Report] fails in its mission. Many conclusions are drawn which are not justifiable with the limited, existing data, in our judgment. We do not believe the report adequately presents the weaknesses in the data base; the uncertainties in the overall understanding and interpretations of the geologic, hydrologic, and geochemical conditions; or the difficulty and magnitude of the remaining effort needed to overcome these deficiencies.

---John B. Robertson, Chief  
Office of Hazardous Waste  
Hydrology  
U.S. Geological Survey  
U.S. Department of Interior  
May 1983

Fundamentally, the Draft EA [Environmental Assessment] is not a scientific assessment of the suitability of the BWIP site. To the contrary, it is an advocacy piece quickly assembled by DOE in an attempt to justify its earlier decision to develop the BWIP site as a repository and in a misguided effort to enable shaft sinking to proceed. It does not honestly assess the pros and cons of the site. Its so-called analysis relies almost entirely on work by Rockwell, which has enormous vested interests in the development of BWIP.

---The Yakima Indian Nation  
Before the U.S. House Committee  
on the Interior  
May 1983

Many of the conclusions on the hydrogeologic characteristics of the BWIP are overstated, misleading, or simply incorrect.

---U.S. Geologic Survey  
May 1983

...[T]he SCR [Site Characterization Report] places too much confidence in the suitability of the site for a repository on the basis of information collected to date. Preliminary DOE statements regarding groundwater travel time, geologic stability and site geochemistry, in the view of the NRC staff, do not consider the present uncertainties about the geologic parameters affecting these site parameters.

---John G. Davis, Director  
Office of Nuclear Material  
Safety and Safeguards  
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory  
Commission  
U.S. Department of Energy  
March 1983

The BWIP documentation typically ... gives an impression of excessive advocacy and insufficient caution and perspective.

---The U.S. Department of Energy  
Overview Committee for BWIP  
April 1983

MORNING EDITION COMMENTARY

TITLE: Day-glo Ducks

DATE: April 4, 1984

BY: Jim Mitchell

TAPE: 3

TIME: 3:23

There's a little coffee shop up in Moses Lake called the Donut Depot. When I lived there, I'd stop by on a Saturday morning, and find the place packed with folks. There'd be the guy that drives the road grader, a couple local businessmen, several farmers, a trucker or two, the president of the local college, the mayor -- all sittin' around drinkin coffee and swappin' stories and lies -- I know some of them were lies! Anyway, one of the favorite tall tales was the one about the day-glo ducks. There's this great duck hunting area (great that is if you enjoy slogging around in the swamp at four o'clock on a November morning). It's called the Potholes Reservoir. And duck hunter type guys flock over here from Seattle to drink and shoot and catch colds. But there's a new twist. They don't have to wait for dawn anymore. Seems the ducks have been wintering on the cooling ponds a few miles south at Hanford, where the water's nice and warm all year round. If it's a real dark night, the duck hunter guys just wait 'til they see this luminescent glowing ball of feathers fly by, and then blast away. It's really pretty handy. Besides, when you get them home, you don't have to refrigerate the meat!

Ha ha ha, the guys respond. But there's a bit of a hollow sound. Like they don't quite trust what's going on down there at Hanford. I mean, this is radioactive waste they've got down there, right? And did you see all those pictures of that stuff they hauled over here from Three Mile Island? All those oil drums full of radioactive water. They just dug a big hole in the sand, and then pushed 'em over the side. They're laying every which way, just dumped on top of each other. Why, I'll bet half of them are leaking already.

You know, there are lots of big farms down there, thousands of acres of potatoes and beets. Lots of those farms are pumping water from down deep. What if that stuff at Hanford leaks down to the water table? We'd have day-glo potatoes to go with the ducks. What if they had some truck accident shipping that stuff? Goodness knows what the roads are like around there in the winter. Or what if that nuclear reactor had some accident? Remember St. Helens? Why, the winds out here would spread the stuff clear to Spokane before we'd even know about it ...

And so it goes. Fear, Fear of an unknown danger, and perhaps not a lot of trust in the agencies that are supposed to be protecting our interests. I've tried to check out some of the facts about the nuclear waste site at Hanford, but can't find much. The aquifer under the waste site seems to run down the Columbia River Gorge, they think. The basalt formations under Hanford are reasonably stable, they think. If they do locate the high-level radiation waste storage site at Hanford, they will use some design that involves building a huge concrete vault far underground, and it should protect our environment from these hazardous wastes indefinitely, they think.

Shortly before his death, I spoke with WSU Professor James Crosby. He had studied the geology of the area for years, and was conversant with the research going on now at Hanford. He expressed real confidence in the study team working at Hanford now, researching the site and storage techniques. I kept his judgement, but have some questions for the researchers and their managers.

We need to know what's going on. We need to know what risks are posed to the water we drink, the food we eat, the air we breathe. We need to know what steps you've taken to prevent the kind of contamination that did occur at Three Mile Island. We need to know the risk to the wheat crop if such a light dusting would occur, what would happen to wheat that was lightly contaminated. We need to know how Pasco, or the Dalles, or even Portland would deal with contaminated water in the Columbia. We need to know, or we'll just go on trusting less and expecting the worst.

For Morning Edition, I'm Jim Mitchell.

TITLE: HANFORD 2  
DATE: April 11  
BY: Jim Mitchell  
TAPE: 1  
TIME: 3:51

For many years now, the nuclear industry at Hanford has been producing and storing radioactive waste materials. The bulk of this material is low-level, drums of contaminated water and other matter. Some is not so benign: fuel rods from spent reactors, and other material carelessly tossed aside during the early days of Hanford's operation. And now the nuclear industry wants to store some very potent material at Hanford: the cores of up to 80 decommissioned reactors, along with all the nation's stockpiled nuclear fuel rods. The sum is a staggering total of lethal waste, dangerous beyond belief. Wastes that will remain dangerous for tens of thousands of years. Wastes that are thousands of times more radioactive than the Hiroshima bombs. Wastes that, if improperly handled or stored, could "go critical" as apparently happened at one such storage site in Russia a few years ago. Wastes so dangerous that even the smallest accident could destroy all the agriculture in the Columbia Basin. Wastes that will have to be transported down our highways, over our mountain passes, through our towns and cities.

The folks who want to see this repository for high-level waste built here are largely those with a vested economic interest in the project. They see it as a lucrative source of jobs, of federal money for community services, and of continued profits generated by this new industry, transporting and storing our dirtiest garbage. And there are strong forces from outside the state who hover above our heads, ready to wield whatever economic and political pressures are required to force you and I to allow them in.

My fear is this: that I cannot trust the companies involved in the project to act in the public's best interest, and that those watchdog agencies who are supposed to protect our interests will not be allowed sufficient say.

Consider this.

ONE. The industry claims that the low-level waste storage activity at Hanford has yet to cost a single life. In the face of the evidence, it seems a miracle. I understand that they have completely lost track of some of the older, but highly radioactive, material. And they continue to carelessly toss barrels of contaminated material off the side of an open dirt pit, letting the barrels lie as they fall, tossing new barrels on top of old. Such carelessness is pictured time and again in photos published in the press. If these materials are dangerous enough to transport here in the first place, why such cavalier treatment by those we've trusted with our safety?

TWO. The geology of the Hanford site is extremely complex, a mixture of rock of various types and ages, all perched atop an active volcanic region. Not one, but several bodies of water flow through this rock at various levels. These streams and lakes follow the Columbia far underground, spreading out under the rich farmland between Hanford and the lower part of the river. According to William Meyer of the U.S. Geological Survey, the complexity of these rock formation may make it impossible to collect the technical data necessary to determine whether or not Hanford is a safe site. What is known does not look good. The concentration of Tritium in the underground water reached the Columbia in 1976, and continues to spread a plume of contamination downstream into the ground water and the river. According to information published this last week, levels in the ground water below Hanford range from 300 to 3000 picocuries. 20 picocuries is considered the maximum safe level.

THREE. No one agrees yet as to what constitutes a safe level of contamination. Scientists disagree widely. Some say that the Columbia is completely safe at the moment, given its enormous stream flow. Others argue that the present level of tritium is already ten times too high and even today's relatively low levels are showing up in the food chain, concentrated hundreds of times in shellfish and egg yolks. EVEN SO, every time the nuclear industry is faced with these facts, they respond by raising the allowable limits based not on research, but on the necessity to maintain their operations.

-More next week. For Morning Edition, I'm Jim Mitchell.

MORNING EDITION COMMENTARY

TITLES:

DATE: APRIL 14, 1984

BY: Jim Mitchell

TAPE:

TIME:

..... the cooling ponds at Hanford to fly by. When the counter clicks loudest, you look up and pull the trigger. Its just another service brought to you by the nice folks who have been producing and storing nuclear waste at Hanford for the past three decades. Three decades of waste from just this one nuclear facility. But now they want to go big time. Now they want to make Hanford into the most dangerous garbage dump this planet has ever known. Now they want to truck in all the high level waste from all over the country. Over snow covered mountain passes, right through the middle of Eastern Washington's largest cities and then bury it some 4,000 feet under the Columbia Basin. Out of sight - out of mind. Disregard for a moment that the containers they are planning to use have a life of only six hundred years, whereas the waste remains dangerously radioactive for 250,000 years. Disregard that the ground water at Hanford is already dangerously polluted. Disregard the danger from the complex and unstable geology of this region. Disregard the fact that even one small accident could destroy all agriculture from Pasco to Spokane and render the area uninhabitable. Disregard the hazards posed by what they estimate could be a continuous lane of trucks bearing the waste material down I-90 and 395. Ask one fundamental question. What voice do we as residents have in the development of this facility?

The Nuclear Act of 1982 provided that the Governor and the Legislature should have the right to speak for the State. In an apparent attempt to railroad the high level facility through without input from the Legislature, Governor Spellman filled the high level waste policy board with appointees sympathetic to the development of the new facility. There were no elected officials as voting members. That's how much say you and I had. Their goal was to have an agreement signed by December 31st, before the Legislature could meet and act to block the facility. Well it didn't turn out that way. Senator Margaret Hurley and Representative Dick Nelson got behind a Joint Senate House Subcommittee on nuclear

waste. Their goal briefly stated was to ensure that any action on the high level repository would involve both the Governor and the Legislator. They worked day and night trying to learn the facts, trying to work out an agreement that would represent our interests. Finally the US Department of Energy officials agreed to meet. Spent half an hour trying to placate the Senator and Representative and then got downright nasty. One fellow said in so many words, we don't have to stand around here, we can do what we darn well please. They went back to Washington recommending that federal liability in case of any one accident be maintained at the 1950's level, at a maximum of some 550 million dollars. 500 million dollars - that's what we'd get if one accident were to destroy a wheat crop or wipe out the center of downtown Spokane. I think Prosser Senator Max Bennet said it best, "we don't have the last word on this, the state can veto this but Congress can override that veto. Any group that wants to unduly slow down this project had better understand that".

When we raise our glasses of Columbia Basin wine to toast the opening of the high level repository, remember to savor the scintillating color, the bouquet, the warm glow. For Morning Edition - I'm Jim Mitchell.

KWSU-KFAE Radio

JIM MITCHELL COMMENTARY

MORNING EDITION COMMENTARY

TITLE:

DATE: April 25, 1984

BY: JIM MITCHELL

TIME: 8:25 a.m.

...The nation's nuclear waste is of double concern because so many of our elected officials, from the governor on down, seem bent on doing anything they can to attract this ripest of budgetary plums. After all, this project means billions of dollars. The problem is that when you are dealing with material this radioactive, the least little accident could ruin our farmland, make our water unusable, destroy our land for hundreds of years, kill thousands of us.

Am I saying that it can't be done safely? No. The question of safety of shipping and storing 80 decommissioned reactors and all the stockpiled fuel rods and contaminated material can only be answered by extensive, unbiased research conducted by talented engineers and scientists. But, as residents of Eastern Washington, you and I do have a right to lay down a few ground rules--or "Ground Zero" rules, as the case may be.

First, to have any credibility, it seems to me that the research must be done by a company or agency that has no vested interest in the outcome of that research. For Rockwell Hanford to receive some \$300 million in contracts to conduct research on whether or not Rockwell Hanford can safely build this facility is like placing the "fox in charge of the henhouse". Even given absolutely integrity of the Rockwell management, who's going to believe them?

Second, the federal government has got to accept unlimited liability in the event of an accident. The old limit of some \$550 million established in the 1950's is patently absurd, especially if we had to rebuild downtown Spokane. Yet, this is exactly what the U.S. Department of Energy is trying to get us to buy.

Thirdly, we have to have an acceptable design that will protect our environment from the anticipated life of this dangerous waste. That means containers that will last as long as the material; that means a design that anticipates means by which changes can be made quickly when problems develop; that means the kind of facility, staffing, and management that guarantees that the problems will be dealt with effectively -- not just pushed aside for some future generation.

Fourth, we have to have some transportation scheme that does not involve tying up one full lane of I-90 and 395 for nothing but nuclear waste transportation -- a plan that does not carry all this waste through the center of our largest cities; a plan that does not endanger our rivers, our farms, our people.

Fifth, we need an iron-clad guarantee that this facility will serve only the United States. Those supporting the facility are trying to open it to foreign nations, who are generating their own nuclear waste. Assuming we can build a safe facility, why not open it to foreign governments as well, at a suitable price? Well, there are two reasons: First, the additional load will quickly tax capacity, requiring more facilities to be built. Secondly, there can be no safe way to transport this material over water.

I wonder what response we would get from Seattle or Portland when they learn this stuff is coming through their harbors, rather than just through the heart of downtown Spokane.

Sixth, before we can even consider such a facility, we must have a complete emergency response plan and it must be made public. We've got to know what we are facing.

And finally, we need a guarantee that "We, the People" are not going to be railroaded into submission by a conspiracy of technocrats and bureaucrats, by Rockwell and the U.S. Department of Energy -- and yes, folks, our governor. We need guarantees that this facility will be in our best interest -- not just those who live on the other side of a certain mountain range; not just those who want to continue to sell nuclear power around the nation and the world. If this repository is built, it must work for all of us -- utilities, the operators, ourselves, and all future generations.

For Morning Edition, I'm Jim Mitchell.