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 NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION  
 ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON REACTOR SAFEGUARDS  
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Distribution:

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MEMORANDUM FOR: John J. Linehan, Acting Chief  
 Repository Projects Branch, DWM (Return to WM, 623-SS)

FROM: *J.S.P.* Sidney J.S. Parry, ACRS Senior Fellow

SUBJECT: NRC STAFF REVIEW OF DR. WHITE'S PAPER

Thank you for the formal response to my inquiry relative to the White paper. While I have verbally transmitted the sense of your comments to Dr. Okrent I know that he will appreciate having an opportunity to study the staff's comments in detail. (I have attached a copy of your memo to the copyholders).

The presentation made to Dr. Moeller, Owen Merrill and myself was of real value and I hope that Drs. Okrent and Shewmon will be able to attend the Waste Management Subcommittee meeting in late October to join in the discussion of the BWIP site.

For the record let me summarize my concerns relative to BWIP. As you are aware I have had extensive experience within DOE's program. As a general rule I never heard a favorable comment as to the geology, hydrology and mineability of that site, except from the BWIP staff. Knowledgeable mining experts continuously gave very negative estimates as to the feasibility of even reaching the repository horizon with an exploratory shaft, much less being able to develop a major facility at depth. However, as your associates noted, no one would say that it might not be possible at a price, in dollars and lives. My programmatic concern is that a marginal site is being investigated which may well drop out of contention very quickly. The program would then be faced with the decision as to whether to open up an additional site, to provide three comparable characterized sites, or to face the probable legal challenge of not having three equivalent sites from which the final selection is made.

My ethical problem is whether or not us, you, me, the NRC Staff, the ACRS Members, etc., have a responsibility to the public and the workers on the project, specifically the miners, to merely raise questions to the DOE staff or to take a firmer position on the likely hazard in exploring a marginal site. I believe that there is a high probability that it will not be possible to reach the repository horizon or that it will prove to be prohibitively dangerous or costly to develop the facility. If that were to prove to be the case I think that they would be very serious consequences to the program as a whole.

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*J.S.P.*

Given the positions taken by DOE in the final EA's relation to the NRC Staff's comments on the draft EAs it might be of value to invite DOE to have knowledgeable representatives including the USGS and Bureau of Mines at the October subcommittee meeting to respond to questions from the members.

Attachment:

Linehan's letter to copyholders

cc: WM Subcommittee Members  
ACRS Fellows  
D. Okrent, ACRS Member  
O. Merrill, ACRS Staff  
J. Kotra, OCM  
J. Austin, OCM