

RAS 13084
No nuclear waste in Ohio! Thanks!



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SONG Press Release: USEC Accused of Hiding Waste Dumping Plans behind Centrifuge

1 message

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To: SHIPPSONG@aol.com

Wed, Jan 10, 2007 at 3:24 PM

USEC, Inc. Docket No. 70-7004

DOCKETED
USNRC

For Release: Wednesday, January 10, 2007

Local Contact: Geoffrey Sea at SONG: Southern Ohio Neighbors Group
740-289-2473, cell 740-835-1508

February 21, 2007 (9:47am)

National Contact regarding sign-on letter to Congress: Mary Olson at the Nuclear Information and Resource Service, Southeast Office, 828-675-1792

OFFICE OF SECRETARY
RULEMAKINGS AND
ADJUDICATIONS STAFF

Docket No. 70-7004-ML

SONG: Southern Ohio Neighbors Group, P.O. Box 161, Piketon OH 45661 SHIPPSONG@aol.com
www.OhioNeighbors.org

SONG PRESS RELEASE

USEC Accused of Hiding Waste Dumping Plans behind Centrifuge Project

In Piketon on Tuesday night, a licensing board of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission met to hear from the public about a proposed uranium enrichment plant to be run by USEC Inc. But instead, the administrative judges of the board got an earful about secret plans to turn the project into a giant dump for commercial spent fuel.

In August, a consortium called SONIC revealed a proposal to concentrate commercial spent fuel from all over the country and around the world at the Piketon site. SONIC has received a federal grant to "study" the idea under a program called the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership or GNEP.

Connections between USEC's "American Centrifuge Plant" and SONIC's "American Recycling Center" were considered incidental, but on Tuesday, local residents made the case that the two projects are one and the same and are part of a "Union Switch scam."

Residents Speak Out at USEC Hearing

Ed Charlé, resident of Waverly and a retired economics professor, presented the licensing board with a rundown of expert references demonstrating that USEC has neither the financing nor the technology to build a centrifuge plant. He quoted energy analyst John Longenecker as saying that the odds of USEC's centrifuge design working are "less than 50-50."

Lorry Swain of nearby South Shore, KY, laid out some of the evidence that USEC is preparing to bring in high-level nuclear waste after obtaining a license for uranium enrichment. In 2004, USEC purchased NAC International, one of the largest providers of spent fuel storage and transport services.

NAC international became notorious for manufacturing defective casks for spent fuel storage and transportation, in two separate bouts of regulatory nightmares between 1978 and 1981, then again in 1999 to 2000.

TEMPLATE = SECY-043

SECY-02

Around the same time that USEC acquired NAC, former USEC board member Dan Moore founded a new company called the Piketon Initiative for Nuclear Independence or ePIFNI. ePIFNI partnered with the Southern Ohio Diversification Initiative to form SONIC, which prepared a comprehensive proposal to store spent fuel at Piketon, before the GNEP program existed.

Over a Hundred National and Grassroots Groups Oppose Centralized Spent Fuel Storage

Simultaneous to the licensing hearing yesterday, a letter was issued to Congress signed by 109 national and grassroots environmental groups, opposing any centralization of high-level commercial waste at Piketon, or elsewhere. The letter was organized by the Nuclear Information and Resource Service and is available at their website at url:

<http://www.nirs.org/nukerelapse/congactions/01-08piketon-sign-on-letters-signatures.pdf>

One of the signatories is Grace Thorpe, daughter of Jim Thorpe, the famous athlete of the Sac-Fox and Potawatomi nations. Jim Thorpe is a revered figure in southern Ohio, because he spent time coaching a baseball team in Portsmouth, Ohio, near Piketon.

Commercial spent fuel is currently stored at individual reactor sites around the country. Plans to dispose of the waste at Yucca Mountain in Nevada have come to naught, especially with the rise of Nevada Senator Harry Reid to Senate Majority Leader. A second plan to store the waste centrally on the Goshute Reservation in Utah was shot down by the US Department of Interior in September of 2006.

Piketon has been targeted as bull's eye number three. The Department of Energy, which is legally bound to take possession of the waste, is known to be desperate to find a central storage location. Though eleven sites have been given GNEP study awards, the citizen groups cite evidence that selection is rigged for Piketon, and that USEC is using the enrichment licensing process to cover for the plan.

USEC's Bait'n'Switch

USEC's enrichment business headed toward the dumpster in 2004 because of problems with its unique centrifuge design, alleged monopolistic practices toward its customers, a rebellion by its chief uranium supplier (Russia), and fierce competition from a European-owned company called LES, which is now building a centrifuge enrichment plant in New Mexico, expected to beat any USEC plant into production by more than a year.

In August 2006, USEC delayed the demonstration of its centrifuge technology by more than a year, on top of previous delays. In October 2006, USEC announced unspecified cost increases and suggested it might abandon the project altogether.

Nonetheless, USEC filed a motion to accelerate the NRC licensing process in November, right after the election results suggested that the incoming Congress would be hostile to centralized spent fuel storage. That motion was denied by NRC.

The Department of Energy would need the consent of Congress for legislative changes that would allow a centralized waste storage facility at Piketon. However, on January 4, DOE issued a Notice of Intent to file a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for GNEP.

To citizens groups and local residents, this suggests that DOE and USEC together hope to use an NRC license for a failed centrifuge project to argue in Congress for a waiver of licensing requirements for a Piketon waste dump.

Over 900 residents have signed a petition opposing any importation or storage of high-level nuclear waste in southern Ohio. The petition drive is organized by SONG: the Southern Ohio Neighbors Group.

At the Tuesday hearing, numerous local residents called on the NRC licensing board to postpone the USEC licensing decision until the Bait'n'Switch allegations can be investigated. In testimony, they repeated the same three arguments:

1. Since the plan was kept secret, NRC never considered possible transfer of the site for spent fuel storage by NAC International, USEC's subsidiary, under an amended or programmatic license. No initial license should be granted until this possibility has been fully studied.
2. It makes no sense to grant USEC a license eight months before the company has demonstrated the viability of its centrifuge technology. Such a schedule is an invitation to the bait'n'switch. Licensing should be postponed until after USEC demonstrates its technology, and after USEC shows that it has the financing to complete the project.
3. No license should be granted that allows USEC to sit on its hands for thirty years. Unlike most private license applicants, USEC is leasing public land. Any issued license should be revocable at such time as USEC's financial situation indicates the nonviability of the project.

Local resident and co-founder of SONG Geoffrey Sea owns the historic Barnes Home and Farm, which shares a one-mile fence line with the federal reservation. He testified: "First they tried to sell us on 'the American Centrifuge Plant.' Then they tried to switch us to 'the American Recycling Center,' which was their code word for the world's biggest dump. We just think the whole thing is un-American."

The Atomic Safety and Licensing Board will continue to accept written testimony for an unspecified period. Comments should be addresses to:

Secretary, Rulemakings and Adjudications Staff,
U.S.Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D.C. 20555-0001

Regarding: USEC Inc., Docket No. 70-7004

Attachments:

1. Word file of this press release.
2. Letter to Congress opposing GNEP facility in Ohio with 109 Sign-Ons
3. National Press Release from the Nuclear Information and Resource Service

SONG: Southern Ohio Neighbors Group
P.O. Box 161, Piketon OH 45661
SHIPPSONG@aol.com www.OhioNeighbors.org

3 attachments

-  **Group Letter to Congress Opposing GNEP Dump in Ohio.doc**
47K
-  **National Press Release on Group Letter Opposing GNEP.doc**
23K
-  **SONG Press Release on USEC Hearing and GNEP Letter.doc**
34K

Nonetheless, to do so under the auspices of the federal government, and Piketon is a US DOE site, is not provided for under current law.

As a community of concerned citizens and organizations nationwide, we work together to oppose centralized interim storage of commercial high-level radioactive waste – at any site. As time goes by, the values we share grow only stronger:

- Concern for a scientifically sound, sustainable basis for long-term disposition of radioactive waste (Yucca Mountain does not meet this criterion)
- Concern for security of radioactive material and of any community that hosts it
- Recognition that the risks associated with the transport and centralization of irradiated fuel are *only* acceptable if moving the waste will greatly enhance the security and long-term sustainability of stewardship, as well as keep transport risks to a minimum

To date, all proposals for the “temporary” centralization of commercial high-level radioactive waste have not met these criteria. Today, the ever increasing concern for security in our nation, all by itself, is a basis to oppose moving high-level radioactive waste to a temporary site. In addition, the storage site adds one more, even bigger “target,” since the operating reactor sites will continue to generate waste, and if plans are approved, generate even more. Temporary storage will always dictate additional transport if, or when a permanent site is chosen. If no permanent site is found, the temporary site will, by default, become a permanent dump.

It is a long history, over several decades, where all the so-called “temporary” storage sites have targeted low-income, often Native American communities, or lands sacred to Native Americans.

Interim high-level storage is falsely sold as a jobs program to these poor communities, when the reality is that radioactive waste storage drives away more economic development than it brings.

Piketon is perhaps the worst example yet, near the very bottom of average income in Ohio, in one of Ohio’s richest and most sensitive ecological zones, and at the heart of Ohio’s complex of ancient Native American earthworks in the lower Scioto Valley, right on the ancient Scioto Trail.

If we preserve the status-quo and store waste for the near-term on nuclear utility sites, where it is generated, while not ideal, this at least ensures that multiple, corporate entities in diverse locations serve as interim hosts, and therefore collectively retain a stake in the quest for a permanent resolution. We urge that resources be used to increase safety and security for the waste where it is, pending a worthy long-term disposition. Whatever long-term solution for high-level nuclear waste is ultimately found, resources should now be focused on finding it, not diverted into quick-fix schemes that will neither be quick nor temporary, nor in accord with democratic values. Any solution must meet the clear requirements of federal law which ensure public access to information and public participation.

We the undersigned oppose the Piketon centralized waste storage plan and *any plan* to centralize high-level radioactive waste (irradiated fuel). Shipments cannot be secured during transport; centralization of this deadly waste merely adds one more problem, while resolving none.

January 8th, 2007

Senate Majority Leader, the Honorable Harry Reid
Speaker of the House, the Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell
House Minority Leader John Boehner
The Honorable Senator George Voinovich
The Honorable Senator Sherrod Brown
The Honorable Congressman Dennis Kucinich
The Honorable Congressman Jean Schmidt
The Honorable Congressman Zack Space
The Honorable Congressman Charlie Wilson
The Honorable Congressman David Hobson
Senate Energy Committee Chair, the Honorable Jeff Bingaman
House Energy and Commerce Committee Chair, the Honorable John Dingell
Senate Energy Committee Ranking Member, the Honorable Pete Domenici
House Energy and Commerce Committee Ranking Member, Joe Barton

Dear Member:

As we begin a new year of unified work for the benefit of our great nation, we ask your attention to a matter we find urgent. It has come to our attention that the Department of Energy and private groups acting under the names *ePIFNI* and *SONIC* are moving rapidly to bring our nation's most dangerous radioactive waste to a rural community with important cultural heritage in Appalachian Ohio.

This community has been named as a grant recipient under the Department of Energy's new Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP). We, the undersigned groups, oppose GNEP variously on grounds of national security, local security, degradation of our obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, our responsibility for environmental and cultural resource stewardship, endangerment of public health, and because it will further hurt our stature of leadership in the world. Thus it is that we protest the award of *any* grant under the GNEP program. Nonetheless, we find that the Piketon site warrants immediate attention.

GNEP is currently in the initial stages of program development, prior to official engagement with the public participation portion of the National Environmental Policy Act. News from the Piketon, Ohio, area reveals that a plan to move high-level nuclear waste (irradiated fuel) from commercial nuclear power reactors to the Piketon facility is already well developed to the point that expensive infrastructure changes to the site for the accommodation of irradiated fuel shipments have already been accomplished.

The plan to centralize high-level nuclear waste from commercial nuclear power predates the GNEP proposal. The Private Fuel Storage plan on the Skull Valley Goshute Indian Reservation in Utah was such a project, until recently ruled inappropriate by the Department of the Interior.

Corinne Whitehead
Coalition for Health Concern Benton, KY

Mary Davis
Yggdrasil, a project of Earth Island Institute Lexington, KY

Al Fritsch
Earth Healing, Inc. Ravenna, KY

Ernest Fuller
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Helen Gourlay
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Oscar Shirani
Nuclear Whistle Blower against spent fuel dry cask storage containers (Garbage cans)
Glen Ellyn, IL

Scott Sklar
The Stella Group, Ltd. Arlington, VA

Janet Marsh Zeller
Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League Glendale Springs, NC

Nonetheless, to do so under the auspices of the federal government, and Piketon is a US DOE site, is not provided for under current law.

As a community of concerned citizens and organizations nationwide, we work together to oppose centralized interim storage of commercial high-level radioactive waste – at any site. As time goes by, the values we share grow only stronger:

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North American Water Office Lake Elmo, MN

Bruce A Drew
Prairie Island Coalition Minneapolis MN

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Citizens Utility Board of Wisconsin Madison, WI

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Wisconsin Resources Protection Council La Crosse, WI

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The Sparrow Sings Park Falls WI

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Blue Train Project Des Moines, IA

Senator Don Preister
Nebraska State Senate Lincoln, NE

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Mark Haim
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Dennis Larson.
Peoples Action for Safe Energy Parthenon, AR

Sidney J. Goodman
SJG Design Mahwah, NJ

We join with the people around the Piketon site in opposing this bad plan, and urge your immediate investigation and action.

Sincerely,

Michael Mariotte
Nuclear Information and Resource Service Takoma Park, MD

Grace Thorpe
Daughter of Jim Thorpe and founder of the National Environmental Coalition of Native Americans, Claremore OK

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Friends of Serpent Mound Peebles, Ohio

Connie Altman
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Cc: The Honorable Ted Strickland Governor of Ohio
Energy Secretary Bodman
Chairman Dale Klein, US Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Commissioner McGaffigan
Commissioner Diaz
Commissioner Jaczo
Commissioner Merrifield

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