

CARL LEVIN
MICHIGAN

COMMITTEES:
ARMED SERVICES
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIR
SMALL BUSINESS

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

October 23, 1989

Mr. John C. Bradburne
U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D.C. 20555

Dear Mr. Bradburne:

Enclosed is a petition from Michigan residents regarding the deregulation of low-level radioactive waste. I would appreciate your looking into this matter for me. Please address your reply to Diana Dearmin of my staff.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,



Carl Levin

CL/ddj
Enclosure

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Mar. 20, 1989

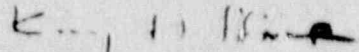
We, as citizens of the United States, are very concerned about the extreme likelihood of the NRC deregulating low-level radioactive waste to levels that are below regulatory concern. These wastes could then be dumped in any landfill, sewer, or burned in incinerators without notification or monitoring. "Low-level" is in itself a misnomer, as a saturated filter, (which is treated as low-level waste), from a nuclear reactor can give a contact dose of 500 rads an hour, equivalent to the skin dose of 25,000 chest x-rays every hour. Plutonium, with a half-life of 24,000 years is considered "low-level."

We are opposed to the deregulation of nuclear waste in our communities for many reasons. 1. There is already a large amount of radioactive waste in our environment, from residues left by atomic testing, industrial and medical wastes, and routine emissions of radionuclides by nuclear power plants. 2. Many radionuclides enter easily into the food chain, i.e. tritium, the cesiums, the iodines, manganese, cobalt, carbon-14. 3. Once there, many radionuclides concentrate in the food chain, (remember DDT?) becoming far more toxic at the top of the food chain, (where people are.) For example, phosphorus-32 went from a concentration of 1 in the Columbia River, to 2 million in the yolk of duck eggs, (where the baby is.) Cesium 137 can concentrate up to 2000 times in fish. Others that concentrate in the food chain are strontium-90, cesium 137 and 134, iodine 129 and 131, and plutonium. There are many more. Some concentrate hundreds or thousands of times in plankton or seaweed. Many radionuclides that concentrate in the food chain, also cross the placenta. 4. Many are persistent, accumulating in the environment and lasting several lifetimes, for example: cesium 135 has a half-life of 3 million years. It is a decay product of xenon-135 which is released in large amounts from the nuclear power plants. (To get the full life of a radionuclide, multiply the half life by 20 years.) 5. Fractional amounts of these radionuclides can cause cancers, leukemias, birth defects--including mongolism, also low-birth weight, which is the leading cause of infant death in the U.S. --sterility, heart defects, premature aging and much more. 6. Disposal creates special problems. Incineration would spread radionuclides throughout the environment. All tritium and carbon -14 burned in an incinerator would be released to the atmosphere in a form that can be inhaled by local residents. Radiation accelerates chemical reactions. For example, plutonium complexed with chlorine, can become up to 1,500 times more potent, a serious problem for the developing fetus as plutonium crosses the placenta.

We are simply asking for a safe place to live, to be able to raise our children without fear. We are against all deregulation of radioactive waste, due to its proven abilities to cause genetic and other health defects in very minute amounts. If babies in utero cannot survive, then the human race cannot survive.

This will be an issue for a long time to come. The decisions on further defining nuclear waste that is below regulatory concern will be made over the next few years unless the people and congress, or the NRC move to stop this process. We implore you, who take some significant responsibility for the well-being and safety of the people and environment of the state of Michigan, to recognize the danger inherent with deregulating radioactive wastes, and to move to stop this process at once. There is yet time to act responsibly to the generations to come, to our grandchildren, who will reap what we sow here today.

With care for the earth,



Kay Haffner,
and other concerned
citizens from Southwestern Michigan.

[Faint handwritten notes and signatures]

RESOLUTION AGAINST DEREGULATION OF RADIOACTIVE WASTE
 ("BELOW REGULATORY CONCERN")

Whereas, the United States Congress and the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) have approved the concept of deregulating heretofore radioactive waste to the status of nonradioactive waste (waste "Below Regulatory Concern," BRC);

Whereas, such deregulated radioactive waste will go to landfills, sewers, incinerators and any other facilities for solid, liquid or hazardous waste, which are neither designed nor intended to take radioactive waste;

Whereas, it has been estimated that more than 30% of the volume of what is currently considered "low-level" radioactive waste could be deregulated by the U.S. NRC;

Whereas, evidence is growing that exposure to low-levels of ionizing radiation have greater negative health effects than previously assumed by national and international agencies;

Whereas, radiation and chemicals have synergistic effects on the environment and human health and such exposures to both may result from deregulation of nuclear waste;

Therefore, be it resolved that WE, CONCERNED CITIZENS OF GREATER GRAND RAPIDS AREA strongly recommend(s) the prohibition of acceptance of radioactive waste deregulated or otherwise, at any solid, liquid, or hazardous waste facilities in this jurisdiction.

Therefore be it resolved that we call for the U.S. Congress to rescind Section 10 of the 1985 Low-Level Radioactive Waste Policy Amendments Act (P.L. 99-240) which requires the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to set BRC standards.

Therefore, be it resolved that we urge the U.S. NRC to halt all activities that will result in deregulating nuclear waste (BRC).

A copy of this resolution will be presented to the KENT County Board of Commissioners and the GRAND RAPIDS City Commission. A copy will also be sent to our state and federal representatives, the Michigan Public Health Dept., the NRC, and to NIRS, (Nuclear Information and Research Services).

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