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DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COMMITTEE

March 6, 1969

DR-2057

PDR

Congressional Liaison
Atomic Energy Commission
Washington, D.C.

Gentlemen:

For some time, I have been concerned with the whole question of discharging radioactive wastes into our country's streams. My recent cause for concern is the proposed construction of a nuclear power plant near Monticello, Minnesota.

Enclosed is a copy of a fact sheet sent to me by one of my constituents in advance of a meeting of the Minnesota Water Pollution Control Agency March 11, at which a decision on the plant reportedly wil e made. I would appreciate knowing what your answers are to tne questions raised in the enclosed sheet.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

Donald M. Fraser

Encl.

Rec'd Off. Dir. of Reg.
Date 3/10/69
Time 1:15

DR. 2057

MONTICELLO: A nuclear energy gamble
The stakes: mutation, cancer, death

Citizens are concerned about the idea of radioactive wastes being dumped into the Mississippi at Monticello. We should be. It's our drinking water. And in spite of the assurances of safety from the Atomic Energy Commission and Northern States Power Company -- the safety and performance records of nuclear energy plants have been dismal.

Of the original 12 nuclear power plants that have been put into operation, 8 have failed -- including the one at Elk River where radioactive leaks forced shutdown -- and the Northern States Power "Pathfinder" plant in Sioux Falls which exceeded its yearly concentration limit despite being operated below full power. Three plants have been abandoned (one at an estimated $7 million decontamination cost, paid by the taxpayer, of course).[1]

In all cases where these plants failed, citizens had been assured, as now, of complete safety.

Q. <u>If there were a real danger to health from radioactive waste, would the Atomic Energy Commission approve of such a plant?</u>

A. It appears that the AEC not only would but in fact has approved of such plants. The Hanford, Washington Atomic Energy facility on the Columbia River is an example.

A 1965 study showed that Oregon counties bordering the Columbia River downstream from the Hanford facility had a 53 percent higher cancer rate than the rest of the state. The JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH reported: "This physiographic pattern of malignancy provides strong circumstantial evidence that not just leukemia but all types of cancer are influenced by bodily ingested radioisotopes in quantities heretofore thought safe."[2] We might add, 'declared safe' by the AEC.

Q. <u>But why would the AEC approve a nuclear power installation where even the slightest question of safety exists?</u>

A. It is important to keep in mind that the AEC was established to promote the use of nuclear energy. Limiting such use, even for safety reasons, is clearly a conflict of interest for the AEC.

Q. <u>What is a 'safe level' of radioactivity in the environment?</u>

A. There is no 'safe level' of radioactivity. Radiation as minimal as X-ray exposure of an unborn child is associated with leukemia in later life.[2] Standards depend on how many deaths and mutations we are willing to accept.

For example, the Federal Radiation Council has set its standards at .5 rem yearly exposure. "If we assume the population of the Twin Cities metropolitan area to be two million, then a continuing yearly exposure of .5 rem -- the FRC standard dose -- would be expected to cause from 10 to 100 cases of leukemia per year and about an equal number of other

types of neoplasms (cancer) ... Whether a loss of this magnitude is acceptable to society can only be determined by considering the benefits to be gained from a particular use of atomic energy."[3]

A question one might ask is 'whose benefits and whose deaths?'

Q. How much radioactive waste would the proposed Monticello Plant discharge into the Mississippi?

A. Northern States Power estimates a total waste, including fuel leaks, of 91.4 Curies yearly.[4]

General Electric, who has a reputation for seriously underestimating radioactive discharge, guesses 30,000 Curies the first year. Note the discrepancy: 29,998.6 Curies. The real figure is anybody's guess. ("A Curie is equivalent to the activity of one gram of radium. We can all recall the excitement and intensive searches instituted when capsules containing a few milligrams of radium were lost or misplaced. Yet the quantity of radioactivity proposed for release from a single nuclear power plant each year, even under the most optimistic assumptions as to its operation, is several times the activity of the entire world supply of radium.")[4]

Q. What about the present argument between Northern States Power and the Pollution Control Agency as to allowable limits of radioactive contamination?

A. This is a sham battle diverting attention from the real point that no amount of radioactive waste is safe and under no conditions should dumping it in our drinking water be tolerated.

Eugene P. Dolum, in his widely used textbook, FUNDAMENTALS OF ECOLOGY, says: "Should a system receive a higher level of radiation than that under which it evolved, nature will not take it 'lying down,' so to speak; adaptations and adjustments will occur along with elimination of sensitive strains or species."

Put another way: radioactive waste dumped into the Mississippi will result in mutations or freaks in plants, animals, fish and people. Cancer and the death rate due to cancer will increase. No limits have been set on the increase of illness and death that is "acceptable." That will apparently depend on how loud people protest as they learn what is happending.

Q. Is is necessary to discharge radioactive waste into the Mississippi River?

A. NO. "The quantity of radioactive wastes which is discharged depends on the extent of the waste treatment system. Radioisotopes in the wastes can vary from none to several million Curies per year. There need be no radioactive discharge since those that are released are the result of deliberate decisions. The only gain offsetting these releases is a slightly lower, and as yet unspecified electrical cost to the consumer."[4]

Q. What can you do?

A. Make your voice heard. Don't leave it to the other guy. Protest now against dumping radioactive waste in any amount into the Mississippi River or any other body of water in Minnesota.

Send your protest to:

- Governor Harold LeVander, State Capitol Bldg., St. Paul, Minnesota
- Mayor Arthur Naftalin, Minneapolis Court House, Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Your Own State Legislator, State Capitol Bldg., St. Paul, Minnesota
- Mr. John Badalich, Chairman - Pollution Control Agency, Department of Health Building, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota

ATTEND POLLUTION CONTROL AGENCY MEETING
(Permit for NSP will be granted or denied at this meeting)

Tuesday, March 11
9:00 AM

Veterans Service Building
Capitol Approach - St. Paul

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Source Material:

(1) United States Atomic Energy Commission, "Operating History of U. S. Nuclear Reactors"

(2) Robert Cunningham Fadeley, "Oregon Malignancy Pattern Physiographically Related to Hanford Washington Radioisotope Storage," JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH, May-June, '65

(3) R. E. Pogue and D. E. Abrahamson, "Benefits, Risks, and Regulations," JOURNAL OF MINNESOTA ACADEMY OF SCIENCE, Vol. 35, No. 1, 1968.

(4) Abrahamson and Pogue, "Discharge of Radioactive and Thermal Wastes," JOURNAL OF MINNESOTA ACADEMY OF SCIENCE, Vol. 35, No. 1, 1968.

Prepared and Distributed by Russell Hatling, 2nd Ward