

Proposed Nuclear Waste Dump and Nationwide Shipments Called “Unlawful”

Ten citizens’ organizations and two industry groups have blasted an application by Holtec International, Inc. for a license to build the world’s largest radioactive waste dump—in New Mexico. If licensed, the “parking lot dump” would lead to tens of thousands of cross-country shipments of the waste—by trains, trucks, and barges—for decades.

Official waste transport routes show containers moving across nearly 90% of US congressional districts, through neighborhoods, cities, farmlands, ocean-fronts, and across major lakes and rivers.

Representing seven of the groups, attorney Terry Lodge said at a recent New Mexico hearing, “The Holtec proposal is a corporate welfare trough that will make the [radioactive] waste problem worse, putting millions of people along transport routes at unnecessary risk.”

The interveners filed 40 objections, demanding that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) Atomic Safety and Licensing Board halt the licensing process, charging that the plan is unlawful. The federal Nuclear Waste Policy Act (NWPA) allows the De-

partment of Energy (DOE) to take possession of the commercial reactor waste, but only at a permanent underground dump site. The NWPA does not permit “title and liability transfer” of the waste to a private “interim” dump site as Holtec proposes. The NWPA precaution is intended to prevent temporary storage from becoming permanent. Holtec’s proposed site in New Mexico is not suitable for long-term waste isolation, the groups argue, and not even suitable for short-term storage.

At the hearing in New Mexico, Holtec lawyer Jay Silberg admitted that under current law, DOE cannot take title to the waste at its “interim” dump site. The admission prompted Diane Curran, an attorney for Beyond Nuclear, to say, “We should not even have to argue this hypothetical case. We call on the licensing board to dismiss the application.”

Sierra Club lawyer Wallace Taylor said at the hearing, “It is irresponsible and illegal to grant a license for 20, 40 or 60 years and ignore that the waste will be dangerous for centuries longer with no plans to continue managing and isolating it.”

Among the objections are environmental racism; water contamination; inadequate waste containers; inability to inspect, monitor or repack waste inside the casks; waste abandonment costs and funding; and needless transport endangerment.

The 3-judge NRC panel could decide in April which groups have “standing” to intervene, and which of the 40 objections will be considered.

Nuclear Power Worsens & Can’t Survive Climate Disruption

By John LaForge

Donald Trump claims, “America will never be a socialist country.” But he’s too late. We already have socialism for the rich, with the nuclear power industry as a prime example.

On a level playing field, nuclear power would go bust. Those owners get financial supports or subsidies that safe renewables like solar power, geothermal, and wind power don’t get. Two particularly large government handouts keep the reactor business afloat, and without them it would crash overnight.

1) In a free market, the US Price Anderson Act would be repealed. The act provides limited liability insurance to reactor operators in the event of a loss-of-coolant, or other radiation catastrophe. The nuclear industry would have to get insurance on the open market like all other industrial operations. This would break their bank, since major insurers would only sell such a policy at astronomical rates, if at all.

2) The US Nuclear Waste Policy Act (NWPA) would also be repealed. NWPA is the government’s pledge to take custody of and assume liability for the industry’s radioactive waste. Without NWPA the industry would have to pay to contain, isolate and manage its waste for the 1-million-year danger period. The long-term cost would zero the industry’s portfolio in a quick “correction.”

“From a business perspective, it’s over”

Even if the industry retained the above two subsidies, economists say the reactor business is finished. Jeremy Rifkin—the renowned economic and social theorist, political advisor to the European Union and heads-of-state, and author of 20 books—was asked his view of nuclear power’s future at a Wermuth Asset Management global investors’ conference. Rifkin demolished its prospects in short order:

“Frankly, I think ... it’s over. Let me explain why from a business perspective. Nuclear power was pretty well dead-in-the-water in the 1980s, after Three Mile Island and Chernobyl. It had a comeback. The comeback was the industry saying: ‘We are part of the solution for climate change because we don’t emit CO2. It’s polluting, but there’s no CO2.’

“Here’s the issue: Nuclear power right now is six percent of [the electric] energy of the world. There are only 400 nuclear power plants. These are old nuclear power plants. But our scientists tell us [that] to have a minimum impact on climate change—which is the whole rationale for bringing this technology back—nuclear would have to be 20 percent of the energy mix to have the minimum, minimum impact on climate change—not six percent of the mix.

“That means we’d have to replace the existing 400 nuclear plants and build 1,600 additional plants. Three nuclear plants have to be built every 30 days for 40 years to get to 20 percent, and by that time climate change will have run its course for us. So I think, from a business point of view, I just don’t see that investment. I’d be surprised if we replace 100 of the 400 existing nuclear plants which would take us down to 1 or 2 percent of the energy [mix].

“Number 2: We still don’t know how to recycle the nuclear waste and we’re 70 years in. We have good engineers in the United States. We spent 18 years and \$8 billion building an underground vault

in Yucca Mountain to store the waste for 10,000 years, but we can’t use it. It’s already no good because there are cracks in the mountain. But any geologist could have told them we live on tectonic plates and you can’t keep underground vaults secure.

“Number 3: We run into uranium deficits according to the IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency] between 2025 and 2035 with just the existing 400 plants. So that means the price goes up.

“Number 4: We could do what the French generation of new plants is doing and recycle the uranium to plutonium. But then we have plutonium all over the world in an age of uncertainty and terrorism.

“Finally, and this is the big one that people don’t realize: We don’t have the water. Over 40 percent of all the fresh water consumed in France each year goes to cooling the nuclear reactors. It’s almost 50 percent now. When it comes back [when reactor cooling water is returned to the lakes and rivers] it’s heated and it’s dehydrating our ecosystems, and threatening our agriculture. We don’t have the water, and this is true all over the world. We have saltwater nuclear plants but then you have to put them on coastal regions and you risk a Fukushima because of tsunamis....

“So it’s no accident Siemens [Corporation] is out, Germany is out, Italy is out, Japan is now out... [and since Rifkin spoke, Spain and Belgium too are out.] I’d be surprised if nuclear has much of a life left. I don’t think it’s a good business deal.”

Rifkin is not alone in this assessment. William Von Hoene, Senior Vice President of Exelon Corp., said last April 16 at the annual US Energy Association’s meeting, “I don’t think we’re building any more nuclear plants in the United States,” Platts reported. “I don’t think it’s ever going to happen,” Von Hoene said. “I’m not arguing for the construction of new nuclear plants. They are too expensive to construct.”

—For a fact sheet on industry leaders who say nuclear power is over, see: <http://nukewatchinfo.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Why-No-Nuclear-Revival-Full-Fact-Sheet.pdf>.



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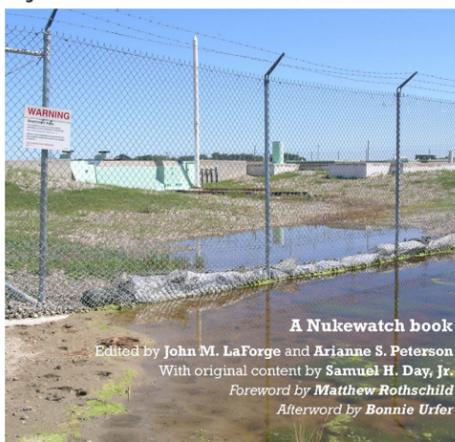
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