

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE LES AUCCOIN
HEARING ON DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY DRAFT
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT ON
DISPOSAL OF HIGH-LEVEL DEFENSE WASTES
AT HANFORD RESERVATION, WASHINGTON
JULY 10, 1986

I APPRECIATE THE OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY'S DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT ON THE DISPOSAL OF HANFORD HIGH-LEVEL DEFENSE WASTES.

FORTY YEARS OF DISPOSAL OF WASTES FROM HANFORD'S DEFENSE OPERATIONS HAVE ALREADY LEFT A BLIGHT ON THE LANDSCAPE OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST. SO IT IS DOUBLY IMPORTANT THAT AS YOU NOW CONSIDER FUTURE DISPOSAL PLANS, THAT YOU FULLY EXAMINE PAST AND CURRENT DISPOSAL PRACTICES AT HANFORD THAT WE BELIEVE ARE UNACCEPTABLE.

BECAUSE OF MY CONCERN OVER THE POTENTIALLY DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCES OF CONTINUING WITH THE STATUS QUO AT HANFORD, I PUSHED FOR SEVERAL AMENDMENTS IN THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE THIS YEAR. I'M HAPPY TO ANNOUNCE HERE TODAY THAT THE COMMITTEE HAS APPROVED MY PLAN WHICH DOES FOUR THINGS:

- *EXPRESSES CONGRESSIONAL CONCERN OVER THE CONTINUED DISPOSAL OF MILITARY LIQUID WASTES INTO THE SOIL AT HANFORD;

- *GIVES THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY 120 DAYS TO DEVELOP A PLAN FOR CEASING THIS PRACTICE AND INSTITUTING ALTERNATIVE DISPOSAL METHODS;

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*REQUIRES AN IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE FOR THESE ALTERNATIVES;

*REQUIRES A SCHEDULE FOR COMPLIANCE WITH ALL
ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS AND REGULATIONS TO ENSURE THAT THE
MILITARY MEETS THE SAME SAFETY STANDARDS THAT COMMERCIAL
FACILITIES MUST MEET.

I HAVE ALSO BEEN WORKING WITH THE UNITED STATES GEOLOGICAL
SURVEY TO PURSUE INDEPENDENT EVALUATIONS OF THE EFFECTS OF
MILITARY WASTE DISPOSAL ON WATER QUALITY IN THE COLUMBIA
RIVER. THEY HAVE NOW AGREED TO UNDERTAKE A SHORT-TERM
SURVEILLANCE STUDY OF THE COLUMBIA RIVER BELOW THE HANFORD
RESERVATION DURING THE SUMMER LOW-FLOW PERIODS. I LOOK FORWARD
TO REVIEWING THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY AND URGE DOE TO DO THE
SAME. ONE THING THAT IS A CONTINUING SOURCE OF CONCERN TO ME
IS THAT THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A FULL-BLOWN STUDY OF THE
HYDROLOGY IN THIS AREA JUST FOUR MILES FROM THE COLUMBIA RIVER.

ENERGY SECRETARY HERRINGTON PLEDGED LAST SEPTEMBER "THAT THE
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY WILL BE DEDICATED TO CORRECTING THE
ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS WE NOW HAVE AND ESTABLISHING A FRAMEWORK
FOR ADDRESSING ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS IN THE FUTURE."

HE ADDED, AND I CANNOT OVEREMPHASIZE THE APPROPRIATENESS OF
THIS COMMENT: "WHAT WAS ACCEPTABLE IN 1945 IS NOT ACCEPTABLE IN
1985."

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AND I CAN TELL YOU THAT DOE'S METHODS ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE IN 1986. THE 53 MILLION GALLONS OF MILITARY WASTES WHICH HAVE PILED UP AT HANFORD MUST BE DEALT WITH IN A MANNER THAT PROTECTS THE LIVES, HEALTH, AND ECONOMIC WELL-BEING OF THE PEOPLE OF OUR REGION.

THERE ARE THREE CRITERIA THAT ABSOLUTELY MUST BE MET IN ADDRESSING THIS PROBLEM. FIRST, THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF THE PEOPLE AND THE REGION MUST BE THE PARAMOUNT CONSIDERATION IN DETERMINING DISPOSAL METHODS AND PROCEDURES.

SECOND, THE STANDARDS FOR DISPOSING OF MILITARY WASTES SHOULD BE AS STRINGENT AS THE STANDARDS FOR DISPOSING OF CIVILIAN WASTES. PLUTONIUM IS PLUTONIUM, WHETHER IT IS GENERATED BY A MILITARY REACTOR OR BY A CIVILIAN REACTOR.

THIRD, YOUR DRAFT EIS RECOMMENDATION TO CONTINUE USING SOIL AS A MEDIUM FOR DUMPING CONTAMINATED WASTES IS UNACCEPTABLE. THIS PRACTICE IS NOT ALLOWED AT CIVILIAN FACILITIES, AND AS WE MEET HERE TODAY IS BEING PHASED OUT AT THE DEPARTMENT'S SAVANNAH RIVER PLANT IN SOUTH CAROLINA. I CANNOT IMAGINE A SINGLE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE DEPARTMENT'S INSISTENCE THAT THIS MISBEGOTTEN PRACTICE CONTINUE AT HANFORD, AND WHY IN PARTICULAR YOU SINGLE OUT THE NORTHWEST FOR SUCH SLIPSHOD TREATMENT. SO I'M DELIGHTED TO HAVE THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE'S SUPPORT FOR STOPPING THIS PRACTICE.

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IT IS CLEAR THAT THE GRAVITY OF THIS PROBLEM REQUIRES THE BEST AVAILABLE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL RESOURCES. THE SAFETY AND HEALTH OF PRESENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS OF NORTHWEST FAMILIES DEMANDS NOTHING LESS. WITH A HALF-LIFE OF 24,000 YEARS, PLUTONIUM IS AN ELEMENT THAT CANNOT BE ALLOWED TO RISE FROM ITS GRAVE AND HAUNT FUTURE GENERATIONS IN OUR WINDS AND WATERWAYS.

IF THE LESSON OF SELECTING A REPOSITORY SITE FOR DISPOSAL OF CIVILIAN NUCLEAR WASTES IS NOW TO BE APPLIED TO THE DEPARTMENT'S DECISION MAKING PROCESS FOR DISPOSAL OF MILITARY WASTES, THEN THE MERIT-BASED CRITERION, SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE, AND THAT IMMEASURABLE ELEMENT OF PUBLIC CONFIDENCE, WILL BE SORELY MISSING.

TOO MANY YEARS OF CARELESS DISPOSAL OF WASTES IN SHALLOW MEDIUM HAVE, AND WILL CONTINUE TO RESULT IN CONTAMINATION OF GROUNDWATER SCOURCES AND ULTIMATELY THE COLUMBIA RIVER. FAILURE TO ADDRESS THIS FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM WILL RESULT IN AN ENVIRONMENTAL CATASTROPHE. IN ADDITION, OURS IS A REGION OF THE COUNTRY WHERE PEOPLE HAVE BEEN WORKING TOGETHER FOR YEARS TO REBUILD OUR ECONOMY AND TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ONE OF THE GREATEST WATERWAYS OF THE WORLD TO INCREASE TRADE AND VITAL FISHERIES RESOURCES. AND THE PEOPLE OF THE NORTHWEST CONSIDER IT A SLAP IN THE FACE TO SEE THE DEPARTMENT AND THE FEDERAL

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GOVERNMENT NOW STUBBORNLY ADHERING TO POLICIES WHICH COULD DEVASTATE THE COLUMBIA RIVER FOR YEARS AND YEARS TO COME. THE PEOPLE OF THE NORTHWEST DESERVE YOUR BEST ENERGIES AND SCIENTIFIC ANALYSIS.

WORKING WITH AND FOR THE PEOPLE I REPRESENT, I DO NOT INTEND TO ALLOW THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY TO PLAY RUSSIAN ROULETTE WITH THE NATURAL RESOURCES WE'VE BEEN BLESSED WITH, RESOURCES ON WHICH OUR LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS DEPEND.