



of Central New York

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The Honorable Daniel Maffei
Syracuse District Office
P. O. Box 7306
1340 Federal Building
Syracuse, New York 13261

Dear Congressman Maffei:

There is much work to be done by those of us who seek a peaceful and just world, a world without the threat of nuclear annihilation. Nuclear weapons present enormous problems for all of us but their danger cannot be divorced from the threat which nuclear power plants represent. One of the many issues surrounding nuclear power is nuclear waste. No safe, permanent solution has yet been found anywhere in the world for the nuclear waste problem. It appears you have recognized this problem by signing on to the letter urging cleanup of West Valley. Thank you so much for this important action.

In the U.S. the only identified and flawed high-level radioactive waste repository site at Yucca Mountain, Nevada where the US wanted to build a maze of tunnels inside Yucca Mountain to store 77,000 tons of highly radioactive spent reactor fuel and defense waste is no longer being considered. "The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) will continue to review the license application for the Yucca Mountain repository for the present, even though the Obama administration has made clear it wants to pursue other waste storage options. The NRC will have funds to continue the application review process in 2010. But the White House has said it intends to cut all funding from the Yucca Mountain project in 2011, including money needed for the licensing process to move forward. President Obama will release his 2011 budget proposal this month (January)." *YuccaMountain.org (Eureka County, Nevada-Nuclear Waste Office).*

Essentially, the vast majority of waste at the Oswego reactors is stored in pools of water about six stories above ground. The pools are also located outside of the containment structures built to reduce the amount of radioactive releases resulting from reactor accidents. While fuel storage pools are universally located outside of containment at US reactors, the far-above ground pool location is unique to the reactor design used at the Oswego reactors (and about 31 others nationwide). It is an especially dangerous design.

Since 2003, waste at FitzPatrick has also been stored outside on a concrete pad in concrete and steel canisters (called dry casks). When fuel pools fill up, the operators start to move the oldest waste into dry casks to make room for new waste. This is going to start at Nine Mile 1 and 2 and Ginna soon, since their pools are finally reaching maximum capacity.

Peace Action is calling for an end to the production of nuclear waste and for securing the existing reactor waste in hardened on-site storage. A bill proposed by U.S. Senators Jim Webb (Democrat from Virginia) and Lamar Alexander (Republican from Tennessee) seeks to double nuclear power in the U.S. over the next 20 years, and relapse further into radioactive waste reprocessing, at taxpayer expense to the tune of \$100 billion, not to

mention radiological risk. Many groups have been urging resources be directed to cleaner, safer, and cheaper energy efficiency and renewable sources of electricity.

While there is yet no solution to the waste problem, Hardened On-site Storage (HOSS) is one good alternative. It is the best option for now and is endorsed by many scientists and environmentalists. HOSS recognizes that irradiated nuclear fuel stored in densely packed pools risks catastrophic radioactivity releases, if the cooling water is drained away due to accident or attack. But it also acknowledges that current outdoor dry cask storage is itself not designed to withstand attack. Thus, HOSS calls for pools to be thinned out and wastes transferred to camouflaged and fortified dry cask storage as soon as possible. HOSS would be an interim measure reducing vulnerabilities for the next several decades. During that period wastes would inevitably remain at reactor sites regardless of which direction management policy goes but Peace Action supports this as an improvement of an already unacceptable situation. More than 150 environmental groups have signed onto the Statement of Principles for Safeguarding Nuclear Waste at Reactors, endorsing HOSS. Needless to say, this is not a permanent solution.

The storage—permanent and temporary--and transport of radioactive waste is perhaps the most controversial aspect of the nuclear power issue. No nation has yet solved the problem of what to do with this material, which must be shielded from the environment for millennia.

So what is the solution to the U.S. high-level radioactive waste problem? Stop making it. Shut down nuclear reactors as soon as possible by promoting energy conservation, efficiency and renewable electricity sources such as solar, wind, geothermal, tidal, biomass, hydro—energy sources that are locally appropriate and create local employment.

Sincerely,

Peace Action of Central New York

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