

OPINION

Is the truth being buried at Yucca Mountain

by Lee Richards

Struggle over Yucca Mountain a critical and decisive battleground for nuclear power's very survival

I've been pondering this question of the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste dump and wondering why it is that the State of Nevada is so powerless to stop it.

Thinking back to my sociological theory classes, I remembered that power, or the probability that one group within a relationship will be in a position to

has been sanctioned by national leaders as a legitimate weapon to use as a threat and deterrent against enemy aggression. Vast national agencies and laboratories have evolved in and around the nuclear industry to oversee its

waiting to happen. Unfortunately, it wasn't until 1982 that the government decided to address this problem.

When the U.S. Congress passed the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982, it sanctioned the actions of Department of Energy, (DOE), by giving it the power and authority to find a dump site and construct a

inside the bureaucratic mire known as the DOE in order to protect its umbrella of power over nuclear affairs.

This makes the struggle over Yucca Mountain a critical and decisive battleground for nuclear industry's very survival. Nuclear and anti-nuclear forces everywhere understand that to strike a blow against the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste storage facility means striking a blow in opposition to nuclear power in general. And just as surely, if this waste repository, or "dump", is successfully built, it will add to the norms and sanctions that already surround our "nuclear world" giving

our state and its institutions. Senator Richard Bryan and Governor Bob Miller vehemently oppose UNLV's decision to accept funding from the DOE for research related to the planned high-level nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain, showing that they understand power.

Allowing UNLV to become a part of the DOE's legitimizing process by conducting research with DOE money is not something we can allow to pass unchallenged. Proving that Yucca Mountain is not a safe place to build such a facility, organizing groups to oppose the DOE's proposals, not accepting DOE money in Nevada and working through the courts to stop the Federal government from railroading the state are tactics being used by the Governor and others.

In this effort, students must also show their disapproval, ask questions, and demand evidence.

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it more legitimacy, power, and invincibility.

What then are Nevadans who oppose the Yucca Mountain Project, to do? What should those who want it questioned and brought out into the open do?

We must question the supposed "legitimacy" of the nuclear industry and its leadership. We must oppose their infiltration of

the Federal Government that we the people understand power, and that in this country, "we the people" are the power.

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carry out its will despite resistance, is a necessity in order for large organizations to achieve their goals. The powerful are not merely given power, but instead, establish and maintain it through norms and sanctions they themselves create. Power, then, is created by the establishment of laws and sanctions made to appear legitimate by association with respected people and institutions.

For example, the nuclear industry has been legitimized over the years by many in the scientific community who view it as a viable and important source of energy, easing U.S. dependence on foreign resources. Moreover, it

research and administration, not to mention employing thousands. As a result, nuclear power has become a well entrenched part of modern American life, all in the "best interest" of the United States.

Yet, it is painfully clear to anyone that knows anything about nuclear energy that a waste disposal method is a necessity if our nation is going to continue to use nuclear power. Nuclear power plants produce waste in the form of rods filled with pellets, that are stacking up all over this nation in what are quickly becoming overtaxed holding pools, or it could be argued, a lot of little accidents

facility to contain the deadly waste. But the DOE, using nuclear power rate-payer monies, contracted out the task of studying and legitimizing a disposal method to well-respected but profit-minded corporations, whose only concern, it seems, is increasing their government funding year-to-year.

In addition, various highly respected scientific laboratories also receive funds to do objective research adding to the DOE's authority in nuclear matters and helping to sanction their will. If their findings are negative, and some have been, they are censored, ignored, or kept hidden

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