

DOE in rush to 'screw Nevada'

Report indicates DOE knows better than to utilize Yucca Mountain

by Dennis Baughman

If Congress had known what the Department of Energy and others knew about Yucca Mountain in 1987, it likely would have backed away from its political rush to "screw Nevada" with the nation's high-level nuclear waste dump.

This was the reaction of Nevada's Agency for Nuclear Projects director Bob Loux when he read *Glass in the Rocks*, a report recently released by Dr. Arjun Makhijani, president of the international Washington, D.C., based Institute for Energy and Environmental Research.

"The report documents yet another crucial aspect of why Yucca Mountain is, and has been known by DOE for years to be, a poor choice for isolation of high-level nuclear waste. DOE knew Yucca Mountain was the worst of the potential sites from a radioactive waste transportation standpoint," Loux said.

"It knew about concerns of one of its own scientists about a possible means by which the repository could be flooded and cause unexpectedly large radiation re-

leases. It knew groundwater flow rates may be significantly greater than its simple models predicted. It knew Yucca Mountain was subject to active faulting and earthquakes.

"And now we discover DOE knew the waste from its weapons plants, which the President in 1985 ordered to be buried with the spent fuel from commercial nuclear power reactors, is vulnerable to radiation release under possible conditions highly specific to a Yucca Mountain repository."

DOE has long cited the advantage of Yucca Mountain being above the water table, offering an

unsaturated repository. On the other hand, this unsaturated condition could cause significant releases from glassified radioactive wastes from a process called "hydration aging."

"How much longer can this multibillion-dollar Yucca Mountain charade be permitted to go on?" Loux asked.

Glass in the Rocks describes how DOE has fully committed itself to a glassification process to solidify liquid, highly radioactive wastes at its Savannah River, S.C., and Hanford, Wash., nuclear weapons production plants. The glassification plant at Savannah River has been built and will soon

be tested. A similar plant is planned for Hanford.

Yet there was known scientific evidence as early as 1982 and 1983 that the glass waste form

to the environment.

And it was known that radiation releases from glassified waste could result in grossly unacceptable exposures under groundwater conditions specific to the Yucca Mountain site, and not shared by any other sites under consideration at the time.

A 1983 National Academy of Sciences report showed how releases from less than even the most severe of the chemical processes could result in radiation exposures many thousands of times greater than that permitted by current regulations.

Glass in the Rocks describes a potentially severe disintegration process, hydration aging, that was first discussed in the scientific literature in 1982.

If then goes on to describe how glassified waste is most vulnerable to this process under likely temperature and hydrologic conditions at Yucca Mountain.

"How long can this multibillion-dollar Yucca Mountain charade be permitted to go on?"

was vulnerable to various chemical disintegration processes, which could cause the release of large quantities of radioactive material



Illustration by Ray Collins

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Letters to the Editor



All's fair in basketball and war

Dear Editor,

A year ago, Jerry Tarkanian gave basketballs and related equipment to the Rancho High School women faculty. UNLV then gave these women faculty members the green light to play the handicapped elementary school children of Las Vegas. The Rancho women faculty proceeded to soundly defeat the handicapped children.

After the handicapped children were conquered, UNLV yelled foul ball and demanded that the Rancho women play them. A date was set for the big game.

UNLV basketball players obtained assistance from more than 30 universities. In the stands were 250 UNLV supporters and 18 Rancho supporters.

UNLV won the basketball game with a score of 207-11. Underfed Rancho could not stand the air bombardment from UNLV. Since the game was away for UNLV, the players returned home to a hero's welcome.

A year ago, the United States gave Iraq military weapons and related equipment. The United States then gave Iraq the green light to invade Kuwait. Iraq proceeded to soundly defeat Kuwait.

After Kuwait was conquered,

the United States yelled foul ball and demanded that Iraq play them. The big game was scheduled for Jan. 15.

The United States obtained financial and military assistance from more than 30 nations. In the stands were 250 million U.S. supporters and 18 million Iraqi supporters.

The U.S. won the war by a score of 100 fatalities to 100,000 fatalities. Underfed Iraqis could not stand the air bombardment from the United States. U.S. players returned home to a hero's welcome.

Brenda Frazier

'Q' questioned

Dear Editor,

I guess the latest publication of the *Quicksilver* magazine, now called *Q*, is better late than never. It is obviously a higher quality magazine than its predecessors, both in the technical sense and in content.

However, I believe there are many questions that need to be asked of this magazine and the people behind it.

I like to write as a hobby and completed a few stories several months ago to submit to *Q* for publication. I visited CSUN for information and got the complete run-around from some lady with a telephone microphone dangling out of her ear who thought she was Captain Kirk.

"I have no idea when the *Quicksilver* will be published again," she said. "Perhaps in a few months—one of the editors was in a car wreck, and the other was drafted to the Kuwaiti war, so I don't know."

This is strictly absurd. If the editors have become unable to perform their duties, shouldn't another party of editors take over?

I tried to find the actual editor, Michael Ollie Clayton, but to no avail. The last place I checked for his phone number was the Registrar's Office, who said he wasn't even a student this semester. (Somebody at CSUN told me the editor was a student here at

UNLV, so I assume they meant Clayton.)

In doing my own investigating, I found out facts that may shatter trust in Student Government even more. Michael Clayton took almost one entire year to assemble *Q* and got paid this entire time with student's money. How much? \$225 a month, along with a 24-credit fee waiver.

Nothing wrong with this, right? You decide. Clayton should have put out two issues by now, but only put out

one. If my calculations are correct, he was paid over \$2,000 in total to be editor.

Why would he remain getting paid if he wasn't performing his duties?

Who is responsible for overlooking the conduct of these editors? CSUN? Joe Bunin and the senate (which wouldn't surprise me)? I would appreciate *The Yellin' Rebel* doing some investigating into this matter.

Rita Desimone
graduate student
hotel administration

P.S.—This is not my real name, and if it turns out to be the name of an actual student, it is strictly coincidental. I do not wish to get involved in UNLV's politics, which seem to be nothing but red tape and bull—t.

"Michael Clayton took almost one year to assemble Q and got paid this entire time with student's money."

Dear Ms. Tucker:

Allow me to extend my support to your efforts to bring *The Yellin' Rebel* to complete independence from student government. I see such independence as a necessary to the health and vigor of your newspaper as a journalistic entity as it is to the health and vigor of the student government and the university as a whole.

The current abstract independence, like other mere abstractions, will, in time prove

to be nothing at all. There is no freedom to exercise the press' traditional role of watchdog of government if government's objections lead to purse string censorship. Censorship, whether direct or indirect, is the worst enemy of truth and integrity.

I commend you for your leadership in this issue. It is evident that your publication approaches the responsibility of independence as something that has to be generated, nurtured and closely guarded.

Only with complete *Yellin' Rebel* independence can UNLV

gain the journalistic credibility it seeks in the ranks of the nation's colleges and universities. UNLV students must support this move, not only for the good of *The Yellin' Rebel*, but for the university and, ultimately, themselves.

Sincerely,

Milan Martinic

Martinic is an assistant editor at the *Las Vegas Sun*. He is a member of the American Newspaper Publishers Association and the Nevada State Press Association.

IF YOU ARE FINISHED WITH YOUR COPY OF THE YELLIN' REBEL, PLEASE RETURN IT TO THE NEWSPAPER RACK - WE RECYCLE ALL OLD ISSUES.