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**From:** Rdoc8u@aol.com  
**Sent:** Friday, 18 November 2005 10:16 PM  
**To:** EET, Committee (SEN)  
**Subject:** Re Inquiry into Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Bill 2005

The Chair- Senator Judith Troeth  
 Senate Employment , Workplace Relations and Education Committee

Dear Senator Troeth  
Re Inquiry into Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Bill 2005

**1) DEMOCRATIC PROCEDURES**

The Federal government ought not to override the law of the N. Territory Government and the wishes of all its political parties and of a significant number of representatives of the Aboriginal community in order to impose a nuclear waste dump upon them . There is no national emergency that justifies such an action . To do would be an undemocratic action and one that contradicts Australia's presence in Iraq based upon a stated desire to establish a free and democratic society for which we are willing to risk Australian lives .

The fact that this law might be passed by a majority of members of the Federal parliament will not make it a democratic law but only one that offends and mimics democracy because of its very nature.( See Note A below re Democracy in Denmark WA )

**2) HEALTH OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE**

Any waste dump is likely to be situated in a remote area and will therefore have most impact upon indigenous Australians . It seems that we have not learned our lessons from exposure of indigenous people at Maralinga in South Australia . Evidence from Sellafield in the UK shows that low level and intermediate level and high level toxic wastes contaminates water , earth and air and affects all plant and animal life resulting in cancers , leukemias and genetic defects in the long term , depending upon the amount and length of time of exposure .

**3)WASTE BURIAL METHODS INCLUDING SYNROC**

All methods of waste burial to date have failed whether these have been in steel drums, concrete pits , or glass . The Australian invention of Synroc has not been demonstrated to withstand destruction by radioactive elements enclosed within it for any considerable period and is as likely to fail as the vitrification processes have already done at Sellafield (SEE NOTE B, BELOW) The Commonwealth government would be irresponsible to rely upon it for the purpose of imposing waste disposal on the N. Territory . If a canister containing a faulty drum was damaged then one speck of plutonium 239 the size of a pinhead could cause cancer if inhaled . And even if the canisters were not damaged before burial, the radioactive waste would corrode them over time as Plutonium 239 is highly toxic and has a half life of 24,000 years .

**4 TRANSPORT OF TOXIC WASTE**

Where centralised storage facilities are used transport of toxic waste has been found to lead to accidents on the highways or by rail or sea .The toxic waste at Lucas Heights should not be moved .

**5) TOXIC WASTE SHOULD BE STORED ABOVE GROUND AND REGULARLY MONITORED**

The toxic waste at Lucas Heights should continue to be stored above the ground and regularly monitored .

**6) PARTIAL SOLUTION TO OUR WASTE PROBLEM**

The only possible partial solution to our current waste problem will be to close down Lucas Heights and

cease to create any more wastes .Each State should be provided with a cyclotron and other essential isotopes can be imported .Essential engineering tools with nuclear components can be imported for a limited time until we can replace them with non- nuclear components . We can manage in the same way as New Zealand does

### **7)ENGINEERING AND SCIENTIFIC GIANTS CANNOT SOLVE NUCLEAR WASTE PROBLEMS**

We should learn from countries like the USA and the UK that the nuclear waste problem is intractable. Huge amounts of toxic waste are waiting for underground burial at Yucca Mountain in Nevada but the people of Nevada will not accept it , as its safety is not assured in the long term .

The UK are attempting to export their waste to WA through the revived Pangea company now known as ARIUS because of the failures at Sellafield . ARIUS also represents Switzerland which one would expect to have the engineering and scientific knowledge to solve their own waste problem .

The problem in all cases is not the stated lack of stable geological structures in which to bury the wastes but simply that no man- made answer exists to deal with radiation outcomes .

### **8) IMPORTING WASTES FROM FOREIGN COUNTRIES THAT BUY AUSTRALIAN URANIUM**

The Commonwealth government must not yield to the temptation to import these wastes and bury them in the Northern Territory in order to earn royalties , pretending that it is performing a moral duty to the world by taking back our wastes .This would be a simplistic excuse that might appeal to some conscience - stricken Australians but it would not be the truth . It should be remembered that the foreign country will already have added to its own pollution by extracting uranium 235 and using it with other materials to make fuel rods for daily use in reactors, which routinely emit toxic gases .Also that the spent fuel rods will be considerably more toxic than the uranium oxide that we originally exported as they will contain plutonium .

### **9) SEDITION LAWS AND NUCLEAR ARMS**

It is possible that any person who objects to the use of any military armaments containing Australian nuclear components such as depleted uranium which is currently being used in Iraq by the UK, may find themselves subject to some aspect of a Commonwealth sedition law in the future , as this could be considered as subverting a military ally.

Yours sincerely

(Mrs ) Judy Forsyth

Bachelor of Socail Science

### **Additional Notes**

#### **A)Democracy in Denmark WA according to the Federal Minister for the Environment compared to democracy in the Northern Territory**

According to a report in the WEST AUSTRALIAN on 16-11-05 the Federal Environment Minister Ian Campbell wants to prevent State Governments from overruling local Council and community wishes where they object to wind farms because they are an eyesore . He aims to stop Federal funding for wind farms unless they are accepted by the community . But he has no such democratic scruples when it comes to the disposal of nuclear waste from Lucas Heights . Since November 7th the Federal Government has been trying to overrule the elected government of the Northern Territory and representatives of Aboriginal communities in order to impose the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Bill that , once it is passed , would force them to allow a dump for nuclear waste from Lucas Heights .

And that will be only the beginning . The N.Territory could go on to become the repository for nuclear waste from the UK or China or any other country to which we export , if the Commonwealth Government so decides , as this will be a highly lucrative way of earning royalties and also allow the Commonwealth to build a bigger reactor as planned , and to continue to research the production of nuclear arms. Any radiation illnesses that may result , over time , from reactor emissions at Lucas Heights , or from toxic waste transport accidents , or air and water contamination from burial , could easily be denied because toxic radiation is invisible , tasteless and odourless . States could be able to ensure Commonwealth funding so that any babies who develop horrible genetic malformations from high level wastes could be kept in the back rooms of hospitals and would not be a public eyesore .

(Mrs ) Judy Forsyth 17-11-05

#### **B) Secret report reveals catalogue of blunders at Sellafield From The Sunday Independent 3-10-05**

**By Geoffrey Lean, Environment Editor**

Published: 02 October 2005

A devastating "catalogue of dubious practices", including sabotage and safety measures based on "guesswork", at the Sellafield plant treating Britain's most dangerous nuclear waste is revealed in an internal report seen by The Independent on Sunday.

The whistleblowing document says that the plant - hitherto thought to be one of the better-run ones at the controversial Cumbrian complex - is "potentially dangerous" and is "becoming difficult to operate properly". One of its section headings reads: "Homer Simpson works at Sellafield".

The revelations could not come at a worse time for the Government and the nuclear industry. Tony Blair is pressing for the building of new reactors in Britain, against stiff cabinet opposition, after announcing a review of the issue in his Labour Party conference speech on Tuesday.

And on Thursday British Nuclear Fuels (BNFL), which runs Sellafield, decided to try to sell off almost all its remaining business, including the treatment plant. The document is a shocking indictment of the £250m waste vitrification plant (WVP), which binds the most highly radioactive and dangerous waste produced by the nuclear industry in glass so it can be stored and disposed of easily.

The whistleblowing, meticulously referenced report, recently compiled by a manager, says the problems at the plant are so great that the Government forced BNFL to call in its major competitor, the French firm Cogema, "to help address serious concerns about how WVP is run". It adds: "BNFL claims its research into the vitrification process proves that the plant is safe and will allow the foreign waste to be returned to its country of origin. Yet BNFL's own research papers and audits show these claims are false."

It adds: "The scientific basis for control of the plant relies at best on interpretation and at worst on guesswork" and that "reports from employees on the site reveal a catalogue of dubious practices".

It goes on: "The low morale is endemic ... Control cables to vital robotic arms in the WVP have been cut, waste drums that should hold solid glass have been accidentally filled with highly active liquid waste, faults in safety mechanisms are not reported properly, the plant has become driven by production targets so much that it is becoming difficult to operate properly.

"Concerns raised at formal quality review committees are referred to secret 'black file' meetings, where no minutes or records are ever made, and no one is held to account. When pushed the senior managers have appeared to rely on arrogance or ... technical jargon to baffle non-experts, including government watchdogs."

It reports that over 20 crucibles used to make the highly radioactive glass have split while in use, and that an inspection of drums filled with the radioactive waste three years ago found up to a third were not safe to be returned to customers for disposal.

Yesterday the independent nuclear expert John Large said that until now he had thought the plant one of the better run ones at the complex, but that it now appeared to be "yet another management failure".

BNFL said last night: "Safety is our number-one priority and all our activities on site are not only monitored by plant management, but overseen by our regulators."

It said that though it was "desirable" to avoid its crucibles splitting this presented "no safety concerns", and that over the past two years all but one of its containers had been certified as "returnable". It denied that "secret black-file meetings" took place.

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