

40 Willow Hill
St. Louis, MO 63124
January 30, 2000

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Ms. Wendy Dixon
EIS Project Manager
Yucca Mountain Site Characterization Office
U.S. Department of Energy
Box 30307, M/S 010
North Las Vegas, Nevada 89036

Dear Ms. Dixon,

1 [I am strongly opposed to the transporting of nuclear waste through St. Louis or through any
2 area.] Since no one has yet discovered a safe method of disposal of nuclear waste, I oppose
all production of it. It is a simple matter to reduce of energy consumption by 20% merely
be cutting back on the extreme waste of electricity which is so prevalent.]

3 [I request that DOE do an environmental impact statement on every route that such waste
would travel along. People along the proposed routes have the right to know everything
about the risks of transporting nuclear waste.]

Attached is a copy of a statement which the Commission on Human Rights of the
Archdiocese of Saint Louis ratified on January 24, 2000. You will receive an official letter
concerning from the office concerning our opposition.

Sincerely,



Margaret P. Gilleo

Statement in Opposition to the Production and Transport of Nuclear Waste

The Department of Energy has a proposal to ship nuclear waste across the United States to a burial site at Yucca Mountain Nevada. According to the proposal, some 70,000 tons of highly radioactive material would travel through St. Louis and other areas on the route to Nevada. The Department of Energy proposes to transport the waste by means of railways and highways over a 25-30 year period. It is estimated that at least 40% of the highway shipments and 25% of the rail shipments would come through the St. Louis area. (The exact routes have not yet been determined.)

The most likely rail route would be on Union Pacific tracks through East St. Louis, across the Mississippi River, through downtown St. Louis, Maplewood, Webster Groves, Kirkwood, and other municipalities, across the state through Jefferson City, Kansas City, and on West. At least one trucking route would probably go from Edwardsville, IL to St. Louis on I-70 across the state through Columbia through Kansas City and West. The irradiated fuel rods which have been accumulating for over 35 years and which will continue to be produced into the foreseeable future, would be shipped through Missouri. Nearly 15 years ago, residents of the greater St. Louis area expressed substantial concern when the Department of Energy sent shipments of nuclear fuel debris from Three Mile Island through our communities.

4 The greatest risk is the possibility of an accident involving a train or truck carrying nuclear waste. Quite recently, a train carrying coal crashed into a home in Illinois, demolishing the house. Fortunately, none of the 6 residents was hurt. Yet accidents involving trains and trucks carrying nuclear waste might not be limited to property damage in a small area. Radioactive gasses and particles disperse in unpredictable directions. The government cannot guarantee that there will never be a train accident or a highway accident involving one of the proposed thousands of nuclear waste shipments to Nevada.

5... In addition, some radiation can penetrate through the casks, and radioactive gases can escape from the transporting vehicles as they travel through our communities. The exact amount cannot be predicted due to the many variables, and accidental releases cannot be monitored. No one can affirm, beyond any shadow of a doubt, that the casks holding the waste will never leak. Thus the federal and state governments cannot offer the public assurance that no one will be exposed to radiation from the radioactive waste traveling through an area. Those who live or work in the vicinity of the routes are at risk of radiation, as are those who drive by the trucks or trains or who stop near them. Among the known human health effects of exposure to radiation are cancer, birth defects, genetic mutations, cellular damage, and damage to immune, reproductive, and hormonal systems.

X

5 cont.

Radiation from nuclear waste thus poses a serious danger to human life and health, and also to animal and plant life, and to the air, water, and soil upon which all life depends. Furthermore, long term consequences of nuclear waste are impossible to predict and may pose a serious threat to unborn generations.

6

In *Centesimus Annus (On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum, Pope Leo XIII landmark document)*, Pope John Paul II calls on the state to provide "for the defense and preservation of common good such as the natural and human environments." (Section 40) Here, the government is clearly failing to heed the call to take of the common good of both human beings and the Earth that they depend on. In *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (On Social Concern)*, John Paul refers to quality of life, saying "We all know that the direct or indirect result of industrialization is, ever more frequently, the pollution of the environment, with serious consequences for the health of the population." (34)

The pope continues, discussing God's command to Adam in Genesis: "The dominion granted to man by the Creator is not an absolute power, nor can one speak of a freedom to 'use and misuse', or to *dispose of things as one pleases*." (Italics added.) This last phrase is a clear call for careful consideration of both long and short term results of any human endeavor. The dominion passage of Gen 2:16-17 is frequently misconstrued to mean that people have a God-given right to do whatever they want with natural resources. However, John Paul states unequivocally that "The limitation imposed from the beginning by the Creator himself and expressed symbolically by the prohibition not to 'eat of the fruit of the tree' shows clearly enough that, when it comes to the natural world, we are subject not only to biological laws but also to moral ones, which cannot be violated with impunity." (34)

7

Sustainable development and moral law require a vigilance to insure that technologies are intended to serve people and enhance the land. In their 1991 document *Renewing the Earth*, the United States Bishops urge that this be done by employing appropriate technologies and by carefully evaluating them before we adopt them. Technologies which produce radioactive waste do not meet these criteria, and the waste poses a serious and life-threatening danger to present and future generations.

We believe that we have a responsibility to provide a safe and healthy environment for the present population and for all generations to come. Therefore, the Archdiocesan Commission on Human Rights of Saint Louis, Missouri, opposes the production and transporting of nuclear waste.