



SRS Citizens Advisory Board

Nuclear Materials Management Subcommittee

Meeting Summary

March 25, 1996

Augusta, Ga.

The Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) Nuclear Materials Management Subcommittee held a subcommittee meeting on Monday, March 25, 7 - 10 p.m. at the Sheraton Hotel in Augusta, Ga. Subcommittee members who attended included Tom Costikyan and Thelonius Jones. P.K. Smith, CAB Education chair also attended. Public attendees included King Singleton, Bob Newman, Rick Geddes and Rod Wilcox. Savannah River Site resource personnel attending were Jay Bilyeu and deLisa Bratcher, Department of Energy-Savannah River (DOE-SR), and Mary Flora and Donna Martin, Westinghouse Savannah River Company (WSRC).

The first half of the subcommittee meeting was devoted to discussing the Plutonium Disposition Forum proposal that the CAB education subcommittee developed for presentation to the CAB on March 26.

P.K. Smith gave a brief presentation outlining the goal, objectives, sponsoring organizations and two different format options. Jay Bilyeu questioned if panelists were going to simply discuss the disposition options or look at the environmental and safety aspects of the options.

Tom Costikyan said plutonium in a stable form was relatively safe. He added the bigger concern is safety and security of the plutonium and keeping terrorists from getting the materials in their possession and making bombs. Such thoughts were strongly portrayed at an international meeting on Plutonium Disposition that Costikyan attended the week of March 22.

Another major point Costikyan heard at the conference was the question of whether plutonium is a waste or a resource. He pointed out that Arjun Makhijani recognizes the potential value of plutonium as a fuel by noting the material can be recovered from the vitrified form if plutonium is determined as a fuel sources hundreds of years later.

In contrast, Costikyan said the borehole disposition option is considered unretrievable. Costikyan said the borehole did not make allowances for any future considerations if the plutonium is considered an asset. P.K. Smith said the education forum would not highlight the borehole option because it is not considered by many as a logical choice.

Costikyan said a goal of the forum should be informing public that plutonium can be handled safely without serious risk of poisoning workers or the public. He cited a study on conducted on graduate students who cleaned the laboratories of the Manhattan Project. According to discussion by Leo Duffy at the Plutonium Disposition conference, the workers were healthier

than the average group of individuals. Costikyan said that Duffy also pointed during the conference, that there has not been any recorded deaths in the United States from plutonium ingestion.

Discussion then turned to the two options of the plutonium forum. Smith said Option A was developed when it was anticipated the governors of Georgia and South Carolina and DOE Acting Under Secretary Tom Grumbly would attend. Option B allowed for more diversity in the panelists.

The budget for the forum was set at a high estimate of \$20,000. She also explained that other well established groups such as the League of Women Voters were going to assist as sponsors.

Smith explained most of the costs would go toward travel expenses. King Singleton suggested the CAB consider providing travel costs for organizations wishing to attend the meeting. Mary Flora cited an occasion where DOE provided transportation from Savannah to a meeting in North Augusta, SC.

Costikyan said he feels the most important part of the education effort is getting out clear, meaningful and accurate information after the forum. Rod Wilcox said he would like to hear from the various civic organizations during the meeting and find out where they stand on the disposition issue and why.

Theolonius Jones said one of the problems involved in the plutonium disposition issue results from the fear people have of the word "plutonium". He said education on the material would greatly enhance the public's perception.

Costkyan added a final note that plutonium can be safely managed; the safeguarding of the material was the higher priority.

Note: Meeting handouts may be obtained by calling the SRS CAB toll free number at 1-800-249-8155.