

Disposal of Radioactive Waste

Ted Kaczynski

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In Part I.A.12 of my letter to Dr. Skrbina dated March 17, 2005, I expressed the opinion, based on “the demonstrated unreliability of *untested* technological solutions,” that the nuclear-waste disposal site at Yucca Mountain, Nevada likely would prove to be a failure. It may be of interest to trace the subsequent history of the Yucca Mountain site as reported in the media.

On March 18, 2005, *The Denver Post*, page 4A, carried an Associated Press report by Erica Werner according to which then-recent studies had found that water seepage through the Yucca Mountain site was faster than what earlier studies had reported. The more-rapid movement of water implied a greater risk of escape of radioactive materials from the site, and there were reasons to suspect that the earlier studies had been intentionally falsified.

The Week, January 26, 2007, page 24, reported a new study: “Special new containers designed to hold nuclear waste for tens of thousands of years may begin to fall apart in just 210 years,” the study found. “Researchers... had pinned their hopes on zircon, a material they thought was stable enough to store the waste...” The scientists had based this belief on computer simulations, but they were “startled” when they discovered how alpha radiation affected the “zircon” in reality.

Zircon is a gemstone. The substance referred to in the article presumably is a ceramic called transformation-toughened zirconia. See NEB (2003), Vol. 21, “Industrial Ceramics,” pages 262-63.

On September 25, 2007, *The Denver Post*, page 2A, reported: “Engineers moved some planned structures at the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste dump after rock samples indicated a fault line unexpectedly ran beneath their original location...”

On March 6, 2009, *The Denver Post*, page 14A, carried an Associated Press report by H. Josef Hebert according to which the U.S. Government had abandoned the plan to store reactor waste at Yucca Mountain. This after having spent 13.5 billion dollars on the project.

On July 15, 2011, *USA Today*, page 4A, carried an Associated Press report to the effect that the U.S. House of Representatives had appropriated funds for further consideration of the plan to store nuclear waste at the Yucca Mountain site.

As of April 2016 I’ve made no systematic effort to follow these developments further, but if any major, definitive action had been taken for the permanent disposal of radioactive waste it probably would have been well publicized, and we would know about it. Various alternatives have been proposed (see Wald in our List of Works Cited), but whatever solution—if any—is eventually adopted, its execution inevitably will be characterized by negligence, incompetence, and dishonesty. See, e.g., *The Economist*, March 19, 2011, page 40; Eisler, page 2A. More likely, no definitive action will *ever* be taken for the permanent disposal of radioactive waste in the U.S. The problem will be allowed to drag on indefinitely, and meanwhile new nuclear power-plants will continue to be built, the festering pools of deadly stuff will grow and grow...

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