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From: Clara Takarabe [mailto:tamaeclara@yahoo.com]
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Comments Addressing the Waste Confidence Rule of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission

The Nuclear Regulatory Committee does not operate as an ordinary federal regulatory government body, as its name suggests. Rather, historically, though it is funded by federal taxation, it functions as a body that forwards the interests of the nuclear energy business. Unfortunately, as a result, in the state of Illinois, this has resulted in the highest number of nuclear reactors being built. The oversight of the power plants in the state of Illinois has been such that in the past decade, that with just one reactor, millions of gallons of radioactive water has been released into the public water ways. The mop-up operation of Braidwood's performance and also its state and federal response at the time of the radioactive release shows that there is much danger in the protocol and functioning of both the engineers of the plant as well as state and federal response.

In November, I attended the NRC Waste Confidence hearing in Oak Brook, Illinois. I wanted to hear what everyone had to say.

Attending there, were a majority of antinuclear citizens and a minority of attendees who were clearly paid by Exelon to testify. Over and over, those young nuclear engineers who were so hubristic to state that they have total confidence in their nuclear plants, and have no questions as to its safety clearly do not know the history of nuclear plants in the state of Illinois nor the history or narratives of those communities surrounding nuclear plants in the state of Illinois. No comments by those bought

by Exelon reflected any nuanced opinion with an iota of a doubt of the complexity of the energy situation that we are presented with here.

The situation in the state of Illinois is such that we have the largest number of reactors with no real solution to the issue of nuclear power plant waste, except to store it at site. With the failure of the federal government to have sane foreign policy or domestic policy, these large masses of spent nuclear waste are NOT SAFE. This is not a question of the soundness of design of the cask that the spent nuclear waste is stored in. It's a question of the fact that it is there at all.

There was an Exelon employee who claimed that the government had enough funds to mop up a nuclear disaster. With our government in its precarious financial situation and with the state of Illinois in such financial dire straights, I wonder if those funds are actually there, and if such a disaster were to happen, is it enough?

This may seem like an aside, but when Kurt Vonnegut was an anthropology graduate student at the University of Chicago, in the late 1940's, the physics department at the university claimed that it had achieved total knowledge in the realm of physics. Today, and yesterday, all of us know that, science had just started to scratch the surface of what will be discovered in the following 70 years in physics. Just because a human being is in science, it does not prevent hubris. And that is what I saw in the young Exelon engineers at the hearing.

Faith in science can be erroneous. I was frightened to see how sure the young engineers of Exelon seemed to truly believe that they knew everything that they needed to know about nuclear safety. At the end of the meeting in Oak Brook, a woman testified as to her fear and despair at trying to find out more information when the millions of gallons of radioactive water was released into the Kankakee River. As she spoke, the young engineers of Exelon--what did they do? They laughed at her and mocked her.

Truly, that was a shocking moment to me. These young engineers, who are so sure of themselves, I question their character and their judgment. Can such people who jeer at a woman seeking information regarding a terrible nuclear event--are they truly concerned about all the far-reaching consequences of our nuclear energy plan? Can they really care about safety if they are so callous?

Even if these young engineers of Exelon may not all be hubristic, did any of them challenge their peers to truly address the process issue of what happened at Braidwood? Was there any discipline applied, any sanctions internally to the appalling behavior of the young engineers?

Even with more humane character, disasters happen, even with great minds. The Challenger and Columbia spacecrafts come to mind. These are huge undertakings that were engineered by the best minds of the world. The best scientists failed.

The young engineers of Exelon, I assure you, are NOT the best minds of the world, since the best minds are working at Apple or at Caltech or some other interesting place. Were they the best minds around, they would not be running nuclear power plants, because truly, who the hell wants to do that. And given that they are NOT the best minds in the world, I fear what judgments they will make with regard to nuclear safety.

I DO NOT HAVE CONFIDENCE IN THE WASTE CONFIDENCE RULE ISSUED BY THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION.

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