



Nuclear Energy Information Service

Illinois' Nuclear Power Watchdog since 1981

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May 12, 2009

Editorial Board
Chicago Tribune
435 N. Michigan Avenue
Chicago IL 60611

RE: Yucca Mt. editorials, present and past

Ladies and Gentlemen, Greetings:

We write in response to Dennis Byrne's editorial of March 12, "Keep Yucca Mt. Project Alive." We attach a copy of his 704 word text, and our rebuttal of 1094 words.

We have no illusions that you will publish it. We send it to you primarily so that you can at least be apprised of the fact that for two decades, your editorial positions on Yucca Mt. have been based largely on ideological grounds and cherry-picked, often incomplete facts and data. We can at least say we have done our duty as an information service by providing you with information that you either have missed, or have deliberately decided should not appear in print. We are in no position to judge which it is; yet, given all the information we have sent to various Tribune editorial board members and writers (with two exceptions) over the years, it would seem to be the latter.

While we have never objected to your differing opinion, nor to your right to express it, we do object to the decades- long (ab)use of your bully-pulpit to spread incomplete and false information about an issue that has enormous environmental and economic impact and consequence for all 13 million Illinoisans who have had to endure nuclear power's omni-presence here; and for the people who writers like Dennis Byrne and others so glibly and facilely write off as necessary sacrifice populations (i.e., the people of Nevada – who get zero benefit from nuclear power).

From the Feb. 7, 2000 bait-and-switch Tribune editorial, "Misplaced Fears About Nuclear Waste," (allegedly written by John McCarron, even though a different Ed-Board member had met for over and hour with NEIS and a delegation from Nevada to discuss their concerns with your position), to today's piece by Dennis Byrne, the standard practice of your Board has been to simply ignore the opposition—regardless the word count. No opportunity for corrections, rebuttals, debates. We challenged you in 2000 after the McCarron op-ed to back up your piece and position in public debate at the Sulzer Library. You refused. We went ahead with it anyway. So we have no illusions that you will use or print the piece we enclose here. But it will be published – elsewhere. And sent to legislators and policy makers, along with this letter.

The great irony is that somehow your Board views as acceptable balanced editorial content and journalism the likes of Dennis Byrne's commentary – fraught as it is with so many factual errors as to be almost indictable were he selling aluminum siding, and slanderous were he not dealing with politicians while hiding behind the 1st amendment privileges of editorialism – yet historically have allowed for virtually no dissent in the matter. Given both the tone and content, if he truly speaks the Board's position on this issue, for all the billions spent on Yucca Mt., you have learned *nothing* about HLRW disposal in the last decade. For all the righteous chest thumping you have done about the likes of former Gov. Blagojevich, Mayor Daley, etc., you seem quite proficient at stifling dissent on matters of public importance yourselves. You recently asked on your pages: will Rep. Madigan *allow* reform?

We ask in this letter – will *you*?

We would be happy to discuss the issue of Yucca Mt. and the permanent disposal of HLRW with you any time, under any circumstances; and are available to provide you with information about the responsible storage and disposal of HLRW should you request it. You have the choice moving forward of fostering intelligent and much-needed transparent debate on this controversial issue. Or you can remain the Rod Blagojeviches of radioactive waste policy from the security of your bully-pulpit. Your choice.

For a less-nuclear world,

David A. Kraft, Director