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73

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement by U.S. Sen. Bob Dole before Joint Committee on Atomic Energy

WASHINGTON, D.C., March 16 --- In a statement before the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, today, U.S. Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kans.) said that "prudent public health and environmental policy" must provide the major guidelines in deciding whether to build a nuclear repository near Lyons, Kansas.

Dole explained that on June 17, 1970, the Atomic Energy Commission announced its tentative selection of Lyons, Kans., as a long-term storage site of solidified radioactive waste. "Since then," he said, "I have endeavored to keep myself informed of the full implications of this decision, to public health and welfare of the citizens of Kansas and the economic development of Kansas."

Prior Evaluation

The Kansas Senator continued:

This project is representative of the need for assessment of the implications of the 20th Century technology --- in this instance, disposal of nuclear wastes that are by-products of nuclear power generation --- before committing ourselves to full scale development of such technology. Secondly, we must consider carefully the procedures by which a site is selected for application of the necessary technology.

"My concern is whether Lyons, Kans., is an appropriate site," Dole said. "Following these hearings," Dole said, "funds may well be authorized for development of the Lyons, Kans. site." Dole urged that "regardless of how very, very small the risks attendant to the proposed repository, a detailed analysis of these risks be performed, adequate to satisfy not only the federal government, but the citizens of Kansas."

Independent Review

Earlier, Dole requested that the project be scrutinized by an independent, non-governmental study, in addition to the Environmental Impact Statement of the Atomic Energy Commission.

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At Dole's suggestion, the Commission's review was submitted for evaluation and comment to the Senate Public Works Committee's Scientific Advisory Panel.

Dole said that the Panel's comments pointed up several basic questions that the Atomic Energy Commission had left unanswered. A member of the Senate Committee on Public Works, Dole said he would insist that radioactive emissions from any proposed repository not be allowed to exceed those limits required for nuclear power plants. "At an absolute minimum," Dole stressed, "there must be continuous monitoring" --- for possibly atmospheric releases of radiation and groundwater contamination.

Other important considerations that the Atomic Energy Commission review omits, Dole pointed out, are (1) steps that should be taken in the event that retrieval of the radioactive material should become necessary, (2) data concerning the relationship of the Lyons, Sterling and Chase communities' groundwaters and the groundwaters of the proposed repository site, and (3) the possible hazards of transit and transfer of the radioactive material --- to Kansas and elsewhere.

Dole added that although the Lyons, Kans., repository would be the first such site to be constructed, "the cost of disposal should not be the determining factor in considering alternatives. The first such facility should employ all the safeguards that are considered desirable, and provisions should be made for retrieving the wastes should this become necessary in the future.