

January 24, 1977

The Natural Resources Committee convened in Room 437 on January 24, 1977, at 10:00 a.m., with Chairman Shelden presiding. All members were present (except Representative Huennekens and Quilici, excused, and Representative Kessler, absent) for a hearing on House Bill 190.

REPRESENTATIVE KIMBLE, THE BILL's Chief Sponsor, stated the bill is to set a policy for Montana of absolutely forbidding the storage of radioactive substances within the state. He said we need this for several reasons -- one being our geological instability that could cause leaks in the waste storage tanks and so contaminate the water systems that furnish water, not only for Montana, but for every state downstream from us. He said due to this, even if nuclear facilities were built here, the wastes should not be stored here. He felt there should be three or four storage sites located in places that are geologically sound--to reduce length of transportation.

JIM TAYLOR was introduced by Representative Kimble. He gave a brief history of radioactive waste disposal beginning with the Radiation Control Act of 1967 and up through the Montana Rules and Regulations pertaining to radiation control of 1969.

LARRY LLOYD, Department of Health and Environmental Sciences, said he basically agreed with Representative Kimble that we should not have a large radioactive storage site in Montana. However, the bill, as written, would prohibit the storage of all nuclear wastes; and nuclear substances, fairly short-lived, are used in medicine and research and so stored and disposed of in Montana--but he felt presented little threat to the environment. Also, the oil industry in their drilling explorations inadvertently leaves a radioactive substance when it gets hung up--a relatively water insoluble cobalt and little threat to the environment.

CHUCK DALBY, a graduate student in geology from Missoula and representing self, spoke next in support of the bill. A copy of his testimony is EXHIBIT 1.

GEORGE WILLIAM BAGBY, geologist from Columbia Falls, representing self, spoke next in support of the bill. A written copy of his testimony is EXHIBIT 2.

JIM LYNCH, representing Montanans for Safe Power, spoke in support. He said there has never been any demonstrated or proven method for storing radioactive wastes for the length of time it is required--you can expect leakages. He urged the legislature to encourage the development of energy that would not produce these substances.

JOHN NEELING, Missoula, spoke in support of House Bill 190. He urged that no compromise of safety be allowed for economic benefits.

FLORENCE A. CHESSIN, standing in for her husband, DR. MEYER CHESSIN, Professor of Botany at the University of Montana, read a statement from her husband, supporting this bill. The statement is EXHIBIT 3.

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JIM BARNGROVER, from Helena, representing self, spoke in support of the bill. He said some of these materials have to be isolated from man's support system for a half million years and man has not demonstrated in recorded history that he can sufficiently control society, so this would not become a threat. He also said storage sites would be a military target and in danger of sabotage. He also mentioned that there is missing materials from the stockpiles--storage facilities would increase that threat to Montana.

GAIL DEMETRESCU, representing herself and children, placed her small daughter, Beth, on the chair and asked the committee members if this wasn't a beautiful child, and went on to say we need the protection of this bill to protect our children and our children's children.

TOM PELLETIER, from Butte, and representing self, said Montana should be on an anti-nuclear power policy. He said we don't need it and can do much better without nuclear waste.

KAREN ESPESETH, from Missoula, and representing self, submitted a written copy of her testimony and it is EXHIBIT 4.

Also signing but not speaking as favoring this bill were:

ANNA DRESCHER, Senior Citizen from Helena

BARBARA RODRIGUEZ, Missoula, representing self

SIGRIED MATTICE, Senior Citizen from Great Falls

Chairman Sheldon opened the hearing to the opponents.

DR. ROBERT B. STAIGMILLER, United States Range Livestock Experiment Station, spoke first in opposition. He opposed the bill to the extent that it could curtail their use of radioisotopes in research on cattle. A written statement is EXHIBIT 5 and EXHIBIT 6 is a newspaper clipping explaining their work and how they dispose of their wastes.

DR. R. E. SHORT, United States Range and Livestock Experiment Station, spoke next. He said the substances they use are small and pose a very low risk to the population of Montana, as opposed to the benefits they give. He suggested this bill contain a provision for the use and disposal of wastes in agricultural and medical fields.

REPRESENTATIVE KIMBLE in his rebuttal said there was an amendment and he passed out copies to the committee, EXHIBIT 7. This amendment would make it permissible for radioactive wastes used in medical and scientific research to be stored in Montana.

As there were no other opponents, Chairman Sheldon opened the meeting to questions from the committee. In answer to a question, Dr. Staigmiller said that the Nuclear Regulation Committee established procedures and these dealt with disposal--you could: incinerate, put down the drain, land burial and transport to other sites--regulations for each type of disposal and for each type of isotope. In burial, they describe how much can be buried, etc.

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It was mentioned that earthquakes, and climatic changes can raise havoc with storage facilities--and who knows what the next 500 thousand years will bring. It was mentioned that it was difficult to concentrate the liquid to solid--not possible with present technology, and, if possible, would be too hot to handle and transport. Three reprocessing plants for reprocessing plutonium had opened and are now closed. All burials are state owned land, as the federal government deeds land to the state, if it is to be so used because of the eternal care clause.

Meeting adjourned at 11:15 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

  
ARTHUR H. SHELDEN, Chairman