TRIBUTE TO SENATOR PAT MOYNIHAN

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I listened with great attention to my friend, Senator DODD, who I think expresses the feelings that we all have for Senator MOYNIHAN. I first met Senator MOYNIHAN before I came to the Senate. He visited Alaska, my home. Nobody could suggest that he is anything but awe-inspiring, enthusiastic, and interested, the type who leaves one after a short meeting with the feeling that here indeed is an extraordinary individual, a true statesman, a visionary. And the type of individual who we have all had an opportunity to share and enjoy and love during his tenure here.

I extend my heartiest best wishes to Senator MOYNIHAN and his family as he departs this body, and it is with fondness for the contributions he has made. He has made this a much better body because of his contributions. I share the sentiments of my colleague from Connecticut.

NUCLEAR WASTE IN CALIFORNIA

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, let me remind those of you who have followed the issue of energy in this country and the contribution of the nuclear industry of 20 percent of the electricity that is generated in this Nation, with an observation that I made some time ago, and that is this industry is strangling on its waste as a consequence of the inability of the Federal Government to honor the sanctity of a contract made some years ago—that the Government would take that waste beginning in 1998. The ratepayers, over the last decades, have extended about $11 billion to the Federal Government to ensure that the Federal Government would be financially able to take the waste.

The bottom line is that 1998 has come and gone, and the Federal Government is in violation of its contractual commitment. As a consequence, litigation is pending for this breach of contract, subjecting the taxpayers to somewhere between $40 billion and $60 billion in liability.

Now, I stated some time ago on this issue that if you throw the waste up in the air, it has to come down somewhere. Nobody wants it. I was wrong on that. It was thrown up in the air and now it is coming down. Where is it coming down? Well, it is coming down in California, in a place called San Onofre. That is near La Jolla, north of San Diego. It is on the California coast where there are decommissioned and operating nuclear plants.

I ask unanimous consent that an article from the Los Angeles Times of today, November 1, be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Los Angeles Times, Nov. 1, 2000]

APPROVAL OF NUCLEAR WASTE PLAN ADVOCATED

(By Seema Mehta)

Staff at the state's top coastal agency recommended approval this week of Southern California Edison's plans to store thousands of spent nuclear fuel rods at San Onofre nuclear power plant, at least until 2050.

Environmentalists say the California Coastal Commission will be approving the creation of a coastal nuclear waste dump just south of the Orange County border, but the agency's staff says it has no choice under federal law.

''The state of California is preempted from imposing upon nuclear power plant operators any regulatory requirements concerning radiation hazards and nuclear safety,'' the staff for the coastal commission emphasized in bold letters in its report.

A federal official said that there was no risk from the closely monitored nuclear waste, and that environmentalists were needlessly sounding alarms.

''There's a lot of fear among people who really don't understand the nature of the material,'' said Breck Henderson, a spokesman with the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission. ''Everyone thinks nuclear waste is 55-gallon drums full of green golb that we're going to throw in a hole in the ground. They think the drums will rust away and, pretty soon, the water in their tap glows green when it comes out. That's just not the way it is.''

The plant's two remaining operating reactors, which provide energy for 2.5 million homes from Santa Barbara to San Diego, are due to shut down by 2022. A smaller reactor was shut down in 1992. By law, the U.S. Department of Energy must safely dispose of all the site's fuel rods, which contain spent uranium and will be radioactive for thousands of years.

But no high-level radioactive dump exists yet, and controversial plans for a possible site in the Yucca Mountains in Nevada are moving at a snail's pace. Feasibility studies and other technical evaluations of the remote Nevada site, 237 miles northeast of Los Angeles and 90 miles northwest of Las Vegas, have been so delayed that activists worry that temporary storage facilities at San Onofre will become a de facto permanent, West Coast repository for nuclear waste.

''Nothing about storing nuclear waste is temporary,'' said Mark Massara, Sierra Club's coastal programs director. ''Without any planning oversight or review, we're establishing a nuclear waste dump on one of most heavily visited beaches in all of Southern California.''

Henderson of the nuclear commission conceded that Yucca Mountain is a ''political football, I don't know too many people who expect to start shipping fuel there [soon].''

However, he insisted that the federal government has to take responsibility for the fuel, and it will eventually. But with a long line of utilities across the country waiting to get rid of nuclear waste, all sides agree there will be nuclear waste at San Onofre for a good half-century.

Spent nuclear fuel is stored in metal containers under water in cooling pools at the plant. They will be wrapped in two layers of steel and moved to reinforced concrete casks, said Ray Golden, spokesman for San Onofre.

This method, known as dry casking, is considered safer than the cooling pools because it requires less maintenance, leaving less room for error, Henderson said.

But activists worry that the casks will be housed next to working reactors, and could be vulnerable to terrorist attack.

Henderson said antinuclear groups often use such scare tactics. He said his agency would never allow on-site storage if it were unsafe. The casks will weigh more than 100 tons, and could withstand shots from antitank weapons.

''You'd have to hug it for a year to get the same radiation as an X-ray,'' he said.

State coastal commissioners can't debate any of these issues.

''The commission would have liked the ability to look at it, to review whether this was appropriate,'' said commission Chairwoman Sam Wan. ''But we didn't have the legal right to do so.''

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, this article explains that ''The California Coastal Commission will be approving the creation of a coastal nuclear waste dump just south of the Orange County border.''

The repository will be at the San Onofre Nuclear Power Plant, and thousands of spent nuclear fuel rods would be stored there by Southern California Edison until the year 2050. That is 50 years, Mr. President. Isn't it interesting that the State of California, which has refused to site even a low-level nuclear waste storage facility in the Mojave Desert is now going to be home to a high-level nuclear waste dump near the beaches of southern California?

Referring briefly to the proposed Ward Valley waste facility, which would handle medical waste and other low-level waste—the Secretary of the Interior, Bruce Babbitt, stopped this site from becoming a reality. As a consequence, that waste is currently stored in hospitals and research facilities and universities—generally, anywhere near where the waste is created. A lot of it is medical waste and other low-level waste associated with diagnostic tests, cancer treatment and other types of medical and scientific research. But it is all over the place. It is in places that weren't designed to store that waste long-term.

However, national environmental groups and Hollywood activists made Ward Valley a rally cry, claiming water would be contaminated by the waste and seep through the desert and ultimately into the Colorado River. This is low-level material that we are talking about. It involves clothing, like gloves and coveralls from utility workers, material from medical research and any other items that have come into contact with radioactive materials. This low-level waste is produced at hospitals, powerplants, and research facilities that store this waste and periodically transfer it to waste facilities in South Carolina or Utah.

However, these same groups apparently are powerless to stop the San Onofre storage. Why? Because the responsibility to regulate high-level waste belongs to the Federal Government, not the State. And since the Federal Government has not done its job, the bottom line is that there is no Federal repository for high-level nuclear waste, as promised by the U.S. Government. It is an obligation that has been unfulfilled by the eight years of the Clinton-Gore administration,

who has chosen to ignore the contract, hoping they can get out of town and the election will be over before this issue comes up.

How ironic that this issue of the failure of the Federal Government to honor its contract should come up just a little less than a week before the election. As I have stated, that repository was supposed to open in 1998. Failure to do so left the States to come up with their own solutions and subjects the taxpayers to billions of dollars in liability. High-level waste includes spent fuel rods removed from nuclear reactors. This Senator from Alaska introduced S. 1287 in this Congress to allow the high-level nuclear waste to go to the proposed Yucca Mountain high-level storage facility in Nevada for temporary storage as soon as the facility was licensed in 2006.

The California delegation voted against that bill and the Clinton administration vetoed the bill. We are one vote short of a veto override. One of the arguments made was that there was a possibility that the nuclear waste could seep into the water table and move into California. Imagine that. Now I don't believe that is possible, nor do a great number of respected scientist. However, isn't it ironic that Californians will now have to cope with those fears in their own backyard because Yucca is still not opened? Rather than worry about waste in Nevada, they get to worry about waste in California. The site at San Onofre has operational nuclear plants as well as a shut down research reactor. Unfortunately, once shut down begins, they have no place to take the waste, so the waste stays there on the area adjacent to the Pacific Ocean, an area not designed for long-term storage of waste. Nevertheless, there is no alternative because the Federal Government has failed to fulfill its obligation to take spent fuel beginning in 1998.

Let me make it clear, I don't believe there is any danger from the dry casks that will be stored at San Onofre, any more than there was a danger from the low-level waste that would have been effectively stored in the Mojave Desert that could not safely be stored at the Ward Valley site. This California solution—if it is a solution—simply confirms what we have been saying all along: No one wants this waste, but it has to go somewhere. It has finally come down and landed in San Onofre. If the waste isn't ultimately shipped to the temporary facility at Yucca Mountain, it is going to be stored at 80 sites throughout the United States. California now may have its own central repository, at least for Southern California Edison.

Mr. President, this solution is not a solution. And what people need to realize is this situation is really just the tip of the iceberg. While it is applicable to California today, there are over 80 sites throughout this country that will become de facto Yucca Mountains. That is the consequence of not opening up a permanent storage site. And many other states are in the same situation as California—waste to store and no place to store it. To give you some idea, in Florida, 16 percent of the electricity comes from nuclear plants, 5 nuclear power reactors, and almost 2,000 metric tons of waste is in storage. In Michigan, 24 percent of the electricity comes from 4 nuclear power reactors, with 1,500 metric tons of waste on hand there.

In Ohio, 11 percent of electricity is generated from nuclear energy by two nuclear plants with 520 tons of waste.

In Washington State, 6 percent of the electricity comes from nuclear, and there is about 300 tons of research reactor fuel.

In Pennsylvania, 38 percent of its power comes from nine nuclear reactors with 3,000 metric tons of waste.

This situation in California just proves what I have been saying all along. If we don't take responsible action now to solve our high-level waste problems by siting a repository in the Nevada desert, we will end up with somewhere in the area of 80 to 100 sites throughout the Nation storing this waste in environments that are not approved environments for long-term storage. What is happening in California today will happen all over the nation. They will now have, in California, their very own mini-Yucca Mountain for the next 50 years.

The voters in California, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio, Florida, and Illinois need to understand who bears the responsibility for this lack, if you will, of a conscientious effort to take the waste at the time it was contracted for in 1998.

I can only assume that Vice President GORE wants to keep this waste in the States near schools, and hospitals—wherever it is temporarily stored. And the reality of what happened in California today at San Onofre is simply the tip of the iceberg.

This administration has been totally inept in meeting its responsibilities to the nuclear industry; It has breached a contract, it has ignored the contribution of the nuclear industry and its contribution to providing 20 percent of the clean, emissions-free power generated in this country; and, totally ignored the reality that with that clean power comes the responsibility of determining how to handle the waste.

They have handled it all right. They set it in concrete in California in the new site, as I have indicated, at San Onofre, north of San Diego near La Jolla, CA.

Imagine creating a coastal nuclear waste just south of Orange County.

ANNIVERSARY OF THE SAVANNAH RIVER SITE

Mr. THURMOND. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate the Savannah River Site, located in my hometown of Aiken, South Carolina, on it's fiftieth anniversary. On November 28, 1950, President Truman announced the construction of the Savannah River Site. In celebration of this important milestone, I would like to insert the following essay recounting the rich history of this American institution into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

I would also like to extend my appreciation to Mr. James M. Gaver, the Director of the Office of External Affairs at the Savannah River Operations Office and the unofficial ''Savannah River Site historian'' for writing the following composition. I ask unanimous consent that his essay be inserted into the RECORD.

Without objection the essay was ordered printed in the RECORD.

ESSAY BY MR. JAMES M. GAVER

For the Central Savannah River Area (CSRA), the Cold War created greater change than the Civil War, an unlikely storyline in the deep South. Between 1950 and 1955 a transformation occurred with breathtaking speed that eradicated small railroad towns, farms, and mill villages typical of mid twentieth-century Southern life on the Savannah. These familiar agrarian settings were replaced with a technological complex built and operated by men and women who came from all parts of the country. International events and science had come to South Carolina and Georgia in the form of the Savannah River Plant. This industrial complex of nine manufacturing and process areas integrated into one plant was needed to produce plutonium and tritium for the nation's defense.

The participants in the making of the Savannah River Plant—scientists, engineers, construction workers, local politicians, community members, and uprooted residents—were a study in diversity. Yet each, driven by patriotism, contributed to the success of the project. The production line and laboratory were the chosen theaters of war for the scores of scientists, industrial managers, engineers, and support personnel of all descriptions. With families in tow, they became atomic age homesteaders within the Savannah River Valley. Environmental researchers joined their ranks, charting physical change within the plant area and helping give birth to the discipline of ecology. Construction workers and craftsmen came in droves to participate in an industrial and engineering ''event'' that ranked with the construction of the Panama Canal. Industrial boosters and state and local politicians crowed at the site selection that rooted atomic energy development in the CSRA. For them, the country's need marvelously coincided with the economic need of their constituencies. The final profile belongs to the 6,000 individuals or 1,500 families relocated from the 315 square mile area selected for the plant in Aiken, Barnwell, and Allendale counties, South Carolina. Their contribution was remarkable, changing the course of their family's histories.

With Japan's surrender on August 14, 1945, Americans began to celebrate the end of the war and make plans for the future. Their euphoria was shortlived. It was swiftly replaced by images of an Iron Curtain, Soviet domination and terror, mushroom clouds, fears of radiation, and the potential for mass destruction. The Cold War began in Europe over the remains of Nazi Germany as the Allies began planning for postwar Europe. Germany was divided into two nations and the U.S. Congress appropriated billions of dollars to our Allies in Western Europe for defense and economic aid.

Between 1945 and 1947, mistrust between the United States and Soviet Russia hardened into belief systems. The Truman Doctrine presented to Congress on March 12,