

SECURITY AT THE NATIONAL LABORATORIES: A PROBLEM DEMANDING A REMEDY

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OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, this Member rises to call attention to the continuing threat to U.S. national security posed by lax security standards at our national weapons laboratories. As we have learned in recent years, lax security at our Department of Energy national weapons laboratories has resulted in the loss of some of this nation's most important secrets. This Member had the honor to serve on the select committee tasked with investigating the loss of highly sensitive, classified program technology to the People's Republic of China (the Cox Committee), and can testify that security at our national weapons laboratories had been dangerously compromised. Other investigations have come to similar conclusions.

In 1999, a Presidential Commission led by former Senator Warren Rudman pointed to a dysfunctional culture that rebelled at the notion of addressing security requirements at the labs. In recent days, yet another commission has issued a devastating critique, noting that "there is a dissonance within the system" and

that "security people are not talking to scientists."

Mr. Speaker, the issues at stake are too important to ignore. This Member urges President Bush to ensure that proper security becomes a priority at Federally funded institutions, such as the national weapons laboratories, which perform classified work. This Member commends to his colleagues an editorial in the February 24, 2001, edition of the Omaha World-Herald. As the editorial notes, "George W. Bush campaigned last year on a pledge that he would make the security of the nation's nuclear labs a priority. In the wake of these ongoing embarrassments, it is essential that his Department of Energy deliver on that promise."

NUCLEAR SECURITY PARTICULARLY URGENT

One of the Clinton administration's greatest failures was the Department of Energy's bumbling efforts to maintain security at the nation's nuclear weapons labs. Last year, after embarrassing security breaches exposed the department's Keystone Kops approach to security, then-Energy Secretary Bill Richardson said his department had finally set things right. Yet, according to a new press report, in his final days in office, Richardson suspended those security measures pending a review, saying they had harmed morale.

Richardson's action was ill-considered and exasperating. If scientists lack the professionalism to accept the security require-

ments necessary to safeguard the nation's pre-eminent nuclear research labs, those researchers should seek employment elsewhere.

This situation did not come about overnight. For many years, well preceding Clinton, scientists at Los Alamos and other labs tended to display an inappropriate elitist attitude, acting as if they were above the common-sense, if inconvenient, security protocols routinely required of everyone else in the defense establishment. The situation worsened during the Clinton administration as top administrative slots at energy were filled by appointees who exhibited far more enthusiasm for "progressive" endeavors such as unsealing classified documents about past radiation-exposure scandals than in something as passe as buttressing weapons-lab security.

Last week, the chairman of a commission charged with overseeing security at the nuclear labs described ongoing problems. There is "dissonance within the system," he said, and "security people are not talking to scientists." Those are astounding admissions. Even at this late date, after all the scandals and exposes and reviews, the security arrangements for the weapons tabs are still in a shambles?

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