

# Ray slams NRC for waste inspection

Gov. Dixie Lee Ray of Washington delivered a blistering attack — long overdue — at the Nuclear Washington with nuclear wastes, including three from the Three Mile Island nuclear plant near nuclear waste materials, and is especially significant since Ray formerly headed the Atomic Energy Commission.

As a long-standing supporter of nuclear technology, Ray made it clear that she was not questioning the potential of nuclear energy. This should surprise no one. However, after her verbal attack, she informed the NRC that she would close the low-level nuclear waste dump at Hanover, Wash. until all waste containers are inspected to her satisfaction.

Ray was also outraged because she claims the NRC's 24-hour emergency hot-line was not

The most serious of these violations was the presence of leaking containers on a truck carrying waste from North Bellerica, Mass.: Radioactive material had spilled onto the floor of the vehicle's storage area.

Ray says the NRC is "too busy playing 'what-if' games, testing theory and testifying before Congress to do a proper inspection job." And yet, at this very time, 21 trucks are currently en route to Washington with nuclear wastes, including three from the Three Mile Island nuclear plant near Harrisburg, Penn. (according to Associated Press reports). This situation calls to mind the possibility that we are all on board a run-away stagecoach with a bullet-ridden driver at the reins.

It is time for nuclear supporters — as well as those who oppose nuclear energy entirely — to

perts that the technology to handle radioactive wastes already exists, and that political inertia on the part of the federal government is holding back policy development.

This is where the vicious circle begins and ends: Nuclear industry spokespersons blame the government, but private firms continue to produce nuclear waste. Government sources tell us to be patient and trusting and at the same time draw criticism from within their own pro-nuclear ranks. Everyone wants to enjoy the ride, but no one wants to take control of the coach.

Pres. Carter must receive the brunt of the blame for this pitiful lack of leadership, but Congress is also delinquent for its politically motivated indecision. Certainly we have come to expect such inaction from Capitol Hill. Such cynicism does not excuse Carter, however.

Because we have come to expect very little leadership from Congress on an issue requiring decisiveness, direction from the White House is imperative. On the issue of nuclear waste storage and transport we have received no leadership so far.

Ray is to be commended for airing her criticism of the NRC. Her decisive action to protect the welfare of the people of Washington by closing the Hanover plant (until inspection procedures are tightened and double-checked) is also a sensible one. However, it seems logical to ask why her criticism is so late in its delivery.

Those who support nuclear energy, including Carter and his cabinet, must realize that without a clearly defined waste disposal policy, the American people will eventually call for a phasing out of all nuclear energy production, regardless of the economic consequences.

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functioning when she called to report leakage problems in her state. The NRC denies its switchboard was out of operation, but such denials are rather muted. If the pro-nuclear governor of Washington cannot put a call through to the NRC, it might be rather difficult for a citizen with no political clout to do so. And if the NRC cannot monitor the operations of its own switchboard, one wonders how good their inspection rating would be.

Inspection should be carried out "on-sight" where the waste originates and is packaged, says Ray. She closed the Hanover site when inspection of three arriving transport trucks revealed improperly packaged material and mechanical defects.

jointly put pressure on the federal government. We need a consistent and fully-developed policy for dealing with nuclear waste; plenty of it is already in existence and more is being produced every day. Actions such as Ray's decision to close the Hanover facility clearly illustrate the need for such a policy. It is also important to note that Oregonians may be effected by Ray's decision because of the existence of the Trojan nuclear facility, now producing both power and waste within our state. Temporary on-sight storage of Trojan's low-level radioactive by-products cannot — by definition — continue indefinitely; waste material must eventually be sent to a facility like the one at Hanover.

We are "reassured" weekly by nuclear ex-

yours

## Loose logic

Congratulations. Your contributed article of October 1: "Inflation boosting corporate profits" gets at least part of the story right. One of the roots of inflation is, as the article points out, "the growing involvement of the federal government in economic life." Unfortunately, the authors of the story do not follow up this major explanation. Instead, they get involved in an elaborate and deceptive effort to show that it is higher prices charged by "monopolized industries" that cause inflation. The argument is too

simple.

Generally, higher prices don't cause inflation, they are inflation. Any sellers (including trade unionized workers) who have any say-so about the prices they charge will prefer to raise rather than to lower them — if they can get by with it. Given this universal desire, why shouldn't any capitalist economy always have been in an inflationary spiral? Yet this clearly has not been the case. To say that higher prices cause inflation is very much the same as saying that the high temperature on the fever thermometer "causes" the fever it measures.

In the course of trying to

establish this spurious explanation, however, the authors of your article play fast and loose with both logic and data. Most egregious is their statement on the relationship between pay and profits in corporations since 1967. In their words, "Department of Labor statistics show that average take-home pay has declined in real purchasing power since 1967 while corporate profits are 16 percent higher in real dollars. Inflation hides the fact that most corporations now receive a much larger share of the national wealth while most Americans enjoy a declining standard of living."

This is a classic example of the use of statistics to deceive. Note that it is average (per worker) take-home (after taxes and deductions) pay that has declined, while corporate profits are apparently a gross total. The appropriate comparison would be after-tax profits per shareholder. But even if we were to calculate this statistic, it would be irrelevant to the conclusion drawn. For the calculation of relative shares, what we need is total wage and salary payments and total profits paid by corporations. These figures are available (from the Department of Commerce) and the respective shares of the total were 88.1 percent to payrolls and 11.9 percent to profits in 1978 — hardly evidence of "corporations receiving a much larger share of the national wealth."

Perhaps on another occasion the editor could spend some time taking a look at the real roots of inflation. If she did, she would find neither the capitalists' nor the workers' common desire to better their condition can be held responsible for inflation. Nor is it true that one of these groups has benefitted significantly at the expense of the other because of inflation.

Robert Campbell  
Professor, Department  
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truism. Roosevelt, these historians claim, believed that the buck must stop at his desk but died 20 years before it was appropriate to propose so in public. Harry, years later, felt guilty over his minor plagiarism, and when questioned as to the source of his famous words, even turned them against himself and accepted the responsibility for his deed.

I admire your editors for standing up for the traditions in which they believed, and for neither pocketing, shooting nor passing along the buck.

Mark A. O'Brien  
Senior, History

## Fair shake

Just a note to say that I thought the article on me and my office in the Orientation issue of the ODE was one of the best I've ever read. Naturally no one could report such a long interview without some things being slightly different than the way they were meant, but I found Mike Lee was incredibly fair in his summary of what we said and was also without prejudice about the operation of our office. He selected the most important points with skill, considering that we talked for quite a long time.

I hope you'll pass on these thanks to Mike Lee; I've never yet known a reporter who didn't get blasted several times a week for things he or she had written, and I'd like to get in my thanks to bolster him up before the natural onslaught you all take in stride gets underway.

Barbara Nicholls  
5 Friendly Hall  
Counselor for Student Athletes  
Monday, October 8, 1979

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