

Nuclear cleanup jobs abound

WASHINGTON (AP) — The government is looking for a few good men and women to help clean up radioactive contamination at its nuclear weapons plants over the next 30 years.

The job is challenging, with plenty of time outdoors. And officials guarantee a career for just about any college science student.

The Department of Energy said it will take 50 percent more money and twice as many people as previously estimated to carry out a five-year cleanup plan at the waste sites.

"We've got to convince the people in the colleges to go and look at this as the career of the future," said Leo Duffy, head of DOE's cleanup office. "It's an exciting career, an interesting career, one that is involved with new technology."

He said there are at least 20,000 job openings and an annual budget in billions of dollars.

Duffy said some 800 students graduate with science degrees each year and most continue with their studies.

He said the department intends to do a better job of publicizing the benefits of working as an environmental scientist, seeking better ways to contain and dispose of radioactive waste.

"Environmentally, they are going to be out there in the wide open spaces of the West... the sage brush, the rabbits and the elk and the antelope," he said.

In a typical day, he said, a scientist would

"go to work in the morning in a jeep pulling a boat... go fishing for awhile, picking up samples of fish, trapping some animals and taking them back to the laboratory."

As the department tries to lure workers into the field, Duffy said it will face the same image problems it faces every day.

"Technology does not always interest every man and woman," he said. "Distrust in Department of Energy past practices is a problem. The fact you've got radioactivity is a major problem."

Duffy said the lack of scientists and adequate technology are the biggest hurdles to cleaning up weapons plants that have dumped high-level radioactivity into the soil and water.

"We've got a problem," he said. "We have a major program initiated for fiscal year 1990 of approximately \$2.6 billion ... and we don't have the capability ... to support it."

The government now estimates cleanup costs for 1991-1995 will be \$28.6 billion, nearly 50 percent more than the \$19.5 billion projected last fall.

The General Accounting Office predicts costs will total \$150 billion to \$200 billion over the life of the 30-year project.

"The worst thing we can do is go out and throw money at this program and wind up with a scandal in three years that will damage both the department's credibility and the ability to clean up our sites," Duffy said.

Jurors rule out racial bias

NEW YORK (AP) — A black youth who was killed in an attack by a white gang in Bensonhurst was a victim of mistaken identity, not racial bias, according to jurors who cleared one mob member of intentional murder and discrimination.

The jury Tuesday failed to resolve a second murder charge against John Vento, 21, in what has been routinely described as the racially motivated attack on Yusuf Hawkins.

Jurors interviewed after the verdict said prosecutors and journalists had overemphasized the role of race in the slaying, which occurred last August in a predominantly white, lower-middle-class section of Brooklyn and inflamed racial tensions throughout the city.

"We all felt this was really more about mistaken identity," said juror Lee Levin. If Hawkins and three other blacks "had gone to the same section of Bensonhurst on any other night ... these people would not have been involved in an incident," she added.

"Race was used for identification only," agreed juror Judith Schwartz, a teacher. "If they had heard a bunch of Norwegians were coming to the neighborhood looking for trouble, they would have acted the same way."

"If the only reason they attacked (Hawkins) was because he was black — that would have been discrimination," she said.

According to testimony at the trials of Vento and two other young men, the whites believed that a group of blacks and Hispanics was coming to start a fight over a woman who had been involved with one of the whites.

Instead, the whites set upon the 16-year-old Hawkins when he came to the Brooklyn neighborhood to look at a used car that was for sale.

The jury's four black members agreed that race did not motivate Vento and most of his companions. "All they had to go on was some blacks and Puerto Ricans were coming to the neighborhood," said one, Kenneth Spears, a transit worker.

Spears said some members of the mob may have been racists, but added, "We can't get into their minds, so we don't know."

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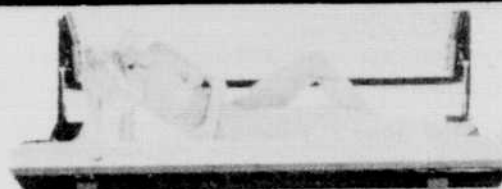
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