

# Group says Energy Department "robbing" cleanup funds

SEATTLE (AP) — The Department of Energy's proposed 1991 budget for cleanup of nuclear wastes includes at least \$250 million that will actually be spent for nuclear weapons production, a citizens group said Wednesday.

"The DOE is robbing the congressional account for cleanup of nuclear weapons sites and using the money instead for nuclear weapons production costs," said Gerald Pollet, executive director of the 16,000-member Heart of America Northwest.

In a 16-page report on its study of the department's proposed budget, the group said inappropriate items included as "cleanup" included: \$34 million for operation of the Plutonium Uranium Extrac-

tion Plant (PUREX) at the Hanford nuclear reservation and \$11 million for treatment of discharges at the plant. \$44.6 million for construction of a cooling tower at the K Reactor at Savannah River in South Carolina, and \$44 mil-

lion for replacement of a waste evaporator at the same plant.

\$45 million for construction of buildings in operations at Hanford and the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory at Idaho Falls.

Nearly \$10 million for construction of a laundry for contaminated clothing and materials at Hanford.

Heart of America Northwest disclosed its report at news conferences in Washington, D.C., and Seattle.

The report accused DOE of deliberately distorting nuclear weapons production costs downward, and shifting those costs to cleanup, which is more politically defensible in Congress.

Tom Olson, spokesman for the Energy Department in Washington, D.C., denied the group's accusations.

"The money budgeted for cleanup is used precisely for that and it's preposterous to say it's used for anything else," Olson said.

Regarding charging operations costs to the PUREX plant, Olson said the plant might be started up to process nuclear wastes as a way of eventually getting rid of them. "That's not a defense production effort," he said.

The DOE has requested \$2.8 billion for environmental restoration and waste management for fiscal 1991, said Heart of America. Of that, the group said, about \$720 million will go toward actual cleanup, with much of the remainder being spent for such things as monitoring wastes in holding tanks.

While such costs rightly belong in the category of "cleanup" costs, said Pollet, they do little toward restoring the environment.

The money would be the first installment for cleaning up 17 nuclear waste production sites in 12 states. The eventual price tag is expected to rise to \$150 billion to \$200 billion over 30 years.

Pollet said Heart of America Northwest wants Congress to require the Energy Department to be more accountable on how its funds are spent, including producing an annual report on cleanup spending.

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