Blue Ribbon Commission on America’s Nuclear Future – What Have They Been Told and Who are They Listening to?

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Overview: Answering the Questions (and then some)

• What have they been told? LOTS
• Who are they listening to? NO IDEA

• What I feel they have been told
• What I hope they are listening to
• What can they really accomplish?
Main Messages to the BRC (as I understand them)

• The process of selecting and developing disposal and centralized storage sites is broken
  – DOE management
  – Funding problems
  – Need for more public consensus building (perhaps the hardest to solve)
  – Recommendation: set up a FedCorp and a new public involvement process, many more…

• Push-pull on managing the waste problem
  – Push: NIMBY (except NM?)
  – Pull: Get my waste out of my state
  – Recommendation: many, but BRC must address how to make storage and disposal “workable”
Options the BRC Has Been Presented With: Move Everything to a Federal Site

• Centralized storage at a federal site
  – Eases the public process?
  – Just move waste from shutdown plants?
    • Why? The most politically palatable: full cleanup of commercial sites

• Transportation of all waste to a site will require considerable effort
  – Lack of transportation capacity
  – No NRC transportation licenses for “high burnup” used nuclear fuel
    • Most utilities now generating “high burnup” used fuel
Options the BRC Has Been Presented With: Wait for Disposal Until…???

• Kick the can down the road until technology can deal with the waste problem?
  – Continued on-site storage for decades (to centuries?)
  – Wait until technology to reduce the amount of waste is available
  • Is it really about the amount of waste? Probably not
  – Technology alone will never completely solve the problem of siting disposal and/or centralized storage

• Recommendation: work to “close” the fuel cycle needs to accelerate (EPRI recommendation: fast reactors first, then reprocessing)
Geologic Disposal Considerations for BRC

• Many geologies can be suitable
  – WIPP is only one of many types
  – Geochemistry does NOT have to be reducing
  – BRC should avoid setting disposal geology criteria

• Disposal regulations
  – Is EPA/NRC combination working?
  – We will revert to outdated regulations if not Yucca Mountain
    • Need to update general regulation
    • Leave regulation to the regulator – not NAS
Any Useful BRC Recommendation will Require Supporting Legislation

• FedCorp
• Reverse the 2002 Yucca Mountain decision and amend the NWPA
• Funding
  – To whom?
  – For what (use of Nuclear Waste Fund)?
  – Take NWF off budget?
• Siting public process: how much can/should be legislated vs. developer doing the public outreach?
Conclusions: Not Much Ground that is Unplowed

• Are we expecting too much from the BRC?
• We don’t have to wait for BRC for everything. Examples:
  – Geologic exploration
  – Recycling (including fast reactor development)
    • Unless BRC clearly states used fuel is a “waste”
  – Disposal and recycling regulatory development
  – DOE-NE roadmaps are a good approach for setting out technical work
• What legislation can actually be enacted?
• If BRC only does one thing: set out an *implementable* public process for siting
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