

## WAGON WHEEL INFORMATION COMMITTEE

PINEDALE, WYOMING 82941

GENERAL CHAIRMAN, Floyd Bousman  
CHAIRWOMAN, Sally H. Mackey

TREASURER, Jo Crandall  
SECRETARY, Daphne Platts

February 20, 1974

The Honorable Thomas Judge  
Governor of Montana  
Helena, Montana

Dear Governor Judge:

We are a group of residents of Sublette County, Wyoming, who oppose the AEC's Plowshare program, especially nuclear stimulation of natural gas. Project Wagon Wheel, a successor to the Rio Blanco experiment, is scheduled for our area. We have spent the past two years researching this technology. We believe it to be economically unfeasible, a waste of public money, and hazardous to our health, our private property and environment. We know that full field development by this means would be intolerable due to the constant damaging ground motions the local residents would experience over a ten to twenty year period.

Wyoming Senator Cliff Hansen has said that "unless full disclosure of all the facts will persuade fair-minded citizens that their fears are not justified, I will oppose Wagon Wheel." Senator Gale McGee has said, "Until the Commission's impact report is capable of justifying the project, I cannot in good conscience support the project -- either as a matter of merit or as a consideration for federal appropriations." Congressman Teno Roncalio, a member of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, has actively and adamantly opposed Plowshare in general and nuclear stimulation in particular.

We realize that you serve the people of a different state, but the AEC plans to extend this blast technology to any state having gas sands, oil shale, or coal. All of the western states stand in great danger right now of being exploited. Coal, oil, and gas will be mined in a big hurry while environmental considerations will be ignored in the name of the energy crisis. Public officials from all states should realize that contamination of air, water, and the minerals mined will eventually affect every state. These nuclear stimulation depredations will occur on federal lands and will be paid for out of federal tax money.

President Nixon's new budget will contain an AEC request for 107.6 million dollars to develop nuclear stimulation of both natural gas and oil shale. Colorado, Utah, or Wyoming will get the first thirty-explosion gas experiment, within five years, according to AEC Chairman Dixy Lee Ray. Nuclear scientists, Dr. Edward Teller in particular, have proposed similar experiments in coal deposits. To recover the gas alone by nuclear means,



February 20, 1974

51,600 explosions would have to be used, according to a recent Western Interstate Nuclear Board study. Another 50,000 are estimated by other sources to be needed to develop the oil shale.

Recent developments in hydrofracturing techniques for tight gas sands (Amoco) and in situ non-nuclear retorting of oil shale (Occidental Oil Company) are methods which appear to be more economical, yet have none of the hazards of radioactive contamination of end products, air, water, and other underground mineral horizons. We feel that these methods should be funded first. Unfortunately the AEC is administering the federal research funds for hydrofracturing, and the official in charge, Dr. Edward Fleming, is totally nuclear-oriented. The grants have gone to companies which also have an interest in the nuclear techniques, not to companies which will really pursue the alternatives impartially.

We sincerely hope that you will oppose this 107.6 million nuclear stimulation appropriation.

We also urge you to oppose legislation about to be introduced by Representative Craig Hosmer of California, Chairman of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, to establish a "nuclear service" to sell atomic devices to industry; and also to allow sale of the radioactive end products of the nuclear stimulation technology to the public. The dangers involved in trucking hundreds of thousands of atomic bombs around the nation -- the risks of accident or hijacking of bombs by criminals or terrorists -- is enough to cause fear, let alone the damage that will be done to private property when all the devices are exploded.

Hearings are currently being held by the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy on extending the Price-Anderson Act beyond 1977. This act provided 500 million dollars worth of free insurance to the nuclear industry. Claims for a major nuclear accident would be paid out of tax money. This act was passed because no private insurance companies would insure the nuclear industry beyond 60 million dollars. The recently released Western Interstate Nuclear Board study, "Plowshare Technology Assessment" states that it is very doubtful that this act applies to Plowshare operations at all. Whether it applies or not, we feel that this act is unconstitutional. It gives huge risks to the public and huge profits to industry. We urge its repeal.

We support HR 5111, a bill sponsored by Congressman Jonathan Bingham of New York, to reorganize the AEC.

We hope that energy development will soon be in the hands of a central energy research management group which will examine and fund impartially all promising energy technologies with due considerations of their social, economic, and environmental costs.

The federal government has been nuclear-oriented since 1945, and after nearly thirty years and billions of dollars,



February 20, 1974

nuclear energy is now supplying 1 percent of our total energy needs, and the AEC's safety record has been dismal.

We are not opposed to development of the vast mineral resources of the Rocky Mountain States. We believe, however, that such development should utilize those methods which do the least environmental damage. We do not feel that the energy crisis is a valid excuse for turning the West into another Appalachia.

Sincerely,

Mary Ann Steele  
Member, WWIC Board of Directors

MAS:jj

P.S. Under separate cover, we are sending you copies of letters and articles documenting our assertions.