

# Halt Plan for Enlarging N-Waste Depository

Mounting opposition in Niagara County to the proposal to use the former Lake Ontario Ordnance Works for permanent storage of nuclear wastes has received well-deserved backing from Rep. John J. LaFalce and Senators Alfonse M. D'Amato and Daniel P. Moynihan.

Lodging their protests in a letter to outgoing Energy Secretary James B. Edwards, the three lawmakers noted that there has been "a great deal of forward momentum" within the department for acceptance of a consultant's draft report for use of the site as a regional waste facility.

The Lewiston facility, renamed the Niagara Falls Storage Site, contains 16,000 tons of radioactive wastes stored there since the atomic bomb project in World War II. Previous Energy Department reports have indicated that these deposits include half the world's known supply of recoverable radium.

According to the legislators, the storage plan submitted to the department by Bechtel National Inc., project manager at the site, represents a "dramatic departure" from the plans put forward last year by the department to decontaminate and decommission the site.

Pointing out that this region is home to the state's only two licensed hazardous waste disposal sites, the West Valley Demonstration Project

and eight former Manhattan Engineer District/Atomic Energy Commission sites, they correctly stressed that Western New York "has borne more than its fair share of the state and the nation's hazardous and radioactive waste-management burden."

Under the Bechtel plan, the ordnance works would become a regional repository for low-level nuclear wastes stored for the last 25 years at dumps in Massachusetts and New Jersey as well as elsewhere in New York State. While Bechtel officials claim that the radioactivity at the site would increase only 3 percent if their plan is adopted, the fact remains that the total volume of nuclear materials would double.

At public meetings and in resolutions adopted by public boards and environmental groups, opponents have cautioned that the 191-acre waste site is only about a mile from the Lewiston-Porter Central School District Campus.

Fortunately, the Energy Department says it is not yet committed to carrying out the Bechtel plan. In light of local concerns and the objections well stated by New York's two senators and Rep. LaFalce, the government should firmly reject any enlargement of this nuclear repository and carry forward instead the original plan for remedial work to secure the materials already there.