

Nuclear Waste Tradeoff for Missile Deployment?

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has agreed to bailout a private Belgian corporation by taking over its nuclear waste currently stored at Lewiston, New York and Fernald, Ohio.

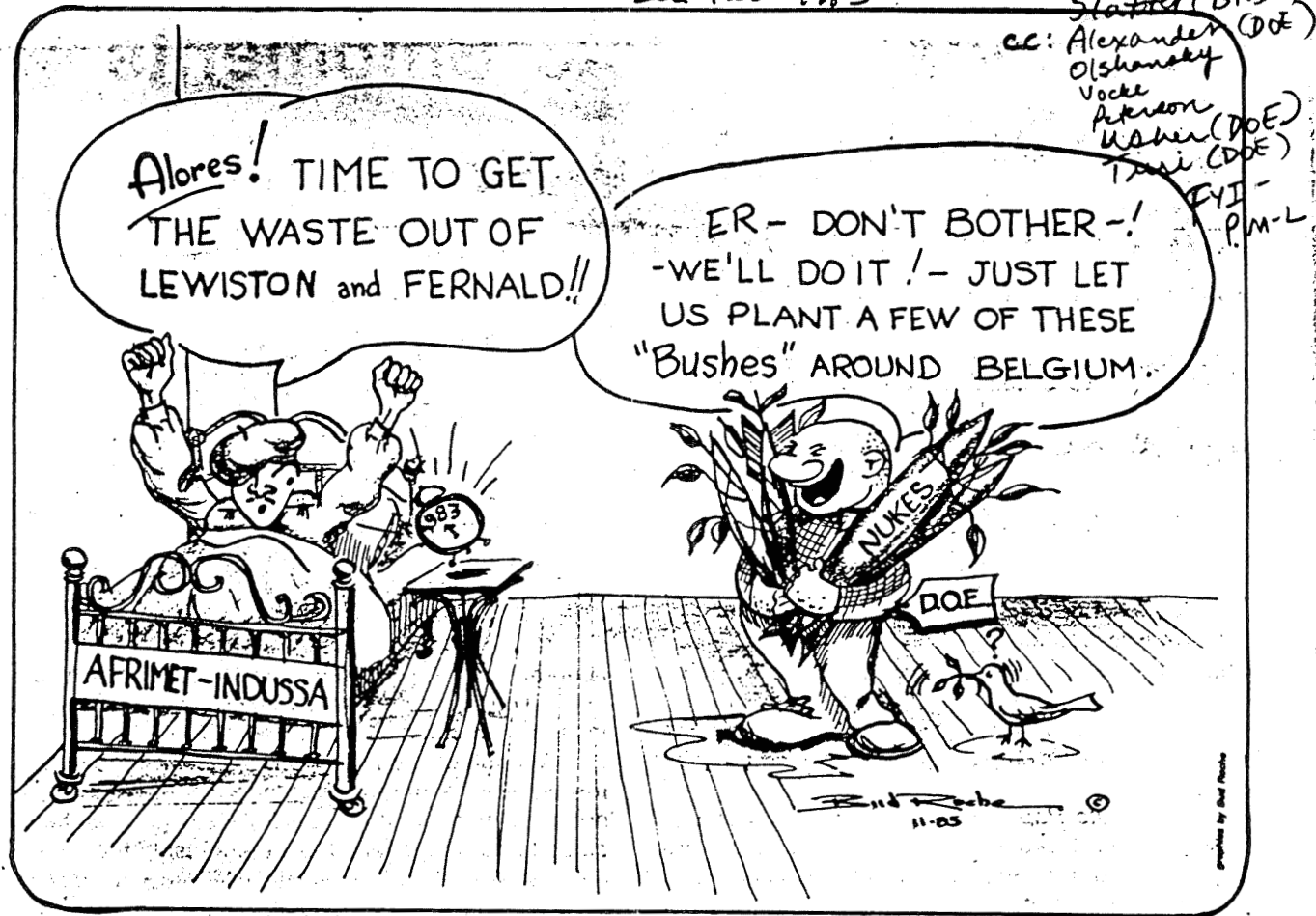
The 23,700 tons of Belgian-owned uranium residues have been left improperly stored since the end of World War II, when the U.S. government conducted a top secret plan to develop the first atomic bomb. The plan was named the Manhattan Project and left nearly 100 sites across the U.S. radioactively contaminated. Communities surround these sites and although the waste was created over 40 years ago, a hazardous legacy remains for future generations.

The Afrimet-Indussa Corp. of Belgium had a lease with the U.S. Department of Energy to store uranium waste until June of 1983. At that time, however, the company was to remove the radioactive material.

The U.S. agreement calls for Afrimet to pay only \$8 million and the U. S. will take over the waste. In addition, Afrimet is relieved of all liability for past and present storage of waste.

The Waste Paper and newswire services have speculated that this agreement helped sweeten the Reagan Administration's plans to deploy 48 cruise missiles in Belgium this winter, 1983. In a letter to Congresspeople in the Lewiston and Fernald areas, DOE Secretary Model stated that his department was "urged by the Department of State to compromise . . . for reasons related to the common defense and security of the U.S. and the government of Belgium."

The issue of the Belgian waste was discussed by Vice-President Bush in his visit to that country last spring. The Buffalo News Washington Bureau reported that in a DOE briefing after Bush returned



from Belgium, officials were told "to make the deal and not hold their feet to the fire on this one."

At hearings in Lewiston in 1982, community residents and Sierra Club Radioactive Waste Campaign staff urged the DOE to hold the Belgian corporation to their contract with the U.S. It seems almost incomprehensible for the U.S. to take over this massive quantity of nuclear waste from Afrimet for a mere \$8 million when we cannot properly isolate our own nuclear waste. Estimates of Lewiston and Fernald clean-ups, which include shipping the waste to a government-operated site in Washington

or Tennessee, are estimated at \$82 million. The final due bill could be much higher.

The Bechtel corporation has the contract with the DOE to clean-up Manhattan Project dumps across the U.S. The recent findings of Bechtel's mismanagement and unconcern for worker health and safety at the Three Mile Island reactor clean-up near Harrisburg, Pa. brings into question the capability of this corporation. Citizens around Manhattan Project sites should consider calling for the removal of Bechtel from these clean-up programs.

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