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Nuclear Plant Promises Called Blank Sheet of Paper

Piketon Area May Have Permanent Environmental Scars

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Portsmouth, OH (HNN) – A meeting of the Department of Energy's Site Specific Advisory Board for clean up and reuse of the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant at Piketon brought forth a tug of war. Much like the Huntington downtown Superblock which lay fallow for nearly 30 years, uses for the contaminated site break down to two camps: Clean up the radioactive waste that still kills former workers versus possibly attracting a so-called new nuclear plant that would allegedly be safe.

The latter would bring jobs to an area starving for employment. But, many nearby residents do not trust the statements that a 'new' nuclear plant would not continue the odyssey of cover ups since the former facility opened during the Cold War in the 1950s.

However, after an elaborate news conference in the summer of 2009, the project dropped off the radar.

Activist and former Piketon employee Vina Colley, referred to past contamination as a reason to avoid nuclear power. "All of their drains and laundry [water] where they washed contaminated clothes and [water from] equipment washed off went into the local creeks, which emptied into the Scioto River, then filtered to the Ohio and down to the Mississippi. We're not the only ones affected. The whole world is affected by what these nuclear facilities are producing and releasing into the environment."

[Editor's Note: During the interview, which will run at a later date, Ms. Colley alleged that radioactive materials at one time were sent from Piketon to a facility at Huntington's old Nickel Plant. They contaminated a section of the Huntington plant. Colley maintains the contents and building remains from



Huntington are buried around the Piketon facility.]

"I'm open minded about a safe nuclear power plant. There never has been one. How can people say naively this time we are going to have a safe one... If there is a contractor or company that can run a safe nuclear power plant, nobody has seen it," stated board member Terri Smith following the meeting. "There's no record of it. You can always find EPA reports and independent research reports on the flumes, plumes and toxins from the plant(s)."

David Krikorian, a 2010 Congressional candidate, explained to HNN that this was his first Site Specific Advisory Board [SSAB] meeting. "At first blush, I noted a lot of contention."

Krikorian, who ran in 2008 as an independent candidate for Congress in Ohio's Second Congressional District, added, "This federal reservation [the plant site] has been used as a political football for the last eight years. Every two years a new proposal is trotted out to buy votes from the public. There has yet to be an honest discussion as to what this facility should be for the people's benefit who live in the area."

Geoffrey Sea, a member of the Southern Ohio Neighbors Group, agreed calling the proposed development an idea by "two politicians to give the people of this area a reason to vote for them to get more jobs. [They] put out an imaginary unicorn of an idea, [but] there is no proposal. There is certainly no funding.

Meanwhile, the SSAB meeting dwelt on the definition of financial conflict of interest for board members. Terri Smith maintained that the majority of the 21 person board of which she is a member have direct or indirect financial connections to the nuclear power industry.

Those inferences prompted one member to label it an "attack," rather than inquiry. A school administrator countered that a new nuclear facility would bring jobs.

Ms. Smith, a member of the Decontamination Decommissioning sub-committee, responded that questioning a "financial interest" is not an

"attack" and the member "may be taking the comment too personally."

Despite the potential economic benefits, she stressed, "How do we know it's something better" and that it will be safe.

For instance, during the discussion, Brian Blair, Ohio EPA Division of Emergency and Remedial Response, told the SSAB members, and in particular the sub-committee on future use, that "we're early" in determining the "natural resources damage that is pertinent to the Portsmouth site." Blair mentioned that there could be "permanent and long term damage" to the water, as well as damage to the fish and wildlife populations.