

COMMITTEE TO BRIDGE THE GAP

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21 July 1992 (310)478-0829

RADIOACTIVE WASTE DUMP SUPPORTERS "COWARDLY" IN SUIT TO BLOCK
HEARING ON SAFETY OF PROPOSED DUMP, CRITICS CHARGE

"THEY FEAR THE PROPOSED DUMPING OF REACTOR WASTES IN UNUNED TRENCHES
NEAR THE COLORADO RIVER COULD NOT WITHSTAND PUBLIC SCRUTINY"

U.S. Ecology, the operator of two nuclear waste dumps in Illinois and Kentucky that have been closed due to leaking radioactivity, today filed suit to prevent the State of California from conducting adjudicatory hearings to address unresolved safety issues associated with U.S. Ecology's proposal to build a similar radioactive waste dump near the Colorado River. The suit demands that a licensing decision be made in the absence of a positive safety finding by an independent Administrative Law Judge who is scheduled to soon commence the adjudicatory hearings.

"US Ecology's action today is cowardly," said Daniel Hirsch, President of the Committee to Bridge the Gap, a public interest group instrumental in obtaining the adjudicatory hearing "The dump company is clearly frightened that its case on behalf of the Ward Valley project would be doomed if it were subject to the detailed public scrutiny of an adjudicatory hearing."

"There is an old saying," Hirsch said, "that if you aren't sure someone is telling the truth, watch their feet, not their mouth; if their feet shift, you know they're lying. ...US Ecology's mouth has been telling us repeatedly that the proposed Ward Valley project is perfectly safe. Their feet—running at full speed from an in-depth hearing to examine those claims—now tell us that they're scared to death that the truth will come out if there is a fair hearing. That is why they have gone to court to block the public hearing designed to answer the unresolved safety questions about the Ward Valley project."

Project critics had been asking for two years for an adjudicatory hearing on Ward Valley, ever since the draft Environmental Impact Statement and proposed license had been issued for public comment. The Department of Health Services (DHS) and the Health and Welfare Agency (HWA) had repeatedly declined to hold such a hearing. Last spring, the Legislative Counsel issued a formal opinion that such a hearing was required by state law and that the DHS and EIWA

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