

## **Minute Regarding Nuclear Issues**

Approved December 2, 2018

Albuquerque Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)  
Presented by the Committee on Peace and Social Concerns

The Albuquerque Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) stands in opposition to the entire cycle of all activities related to the use of nuclear materials. In the spirit of the Kabarak Call, Sixth World Conference of Friends, Kenya, 2012: “We are called to be patterns and examples in a 21<sup>st</sup> century campaign for peace and eco-justice...” As residents of New Mexico we are especially appalled by the impact of the entire cycle of the nuclear industry on the health and well-being of us all.

The use of nuclear materials for weapons, energy and otherwise, except for limited medical uses, and the entire cycle of uranium mining through ultimate disposal, challenge Friends’ deepest beliefs. From our earliest history Friends have expressed opposition to war and the preparation for war. We as Friends are committed to live in right relationship with Indigenous peoples within whose lands we have come to dwell, to “consider the condition of such who are depressed in answering our demands,”(John Woolman, Plea for the Poor, 1764) and to live as careful and caring stewards of the environment and resources drawn from the land.

The different stages in the cycle of extraction, production, use and disposal of radioactive materials are inseparably connected. Plans and proposals for one part of the cycle have implications for all and cannot be considered in isolation. These interrelated threats to peace, environmental stewardship, right relationship and safety compel Albuquerque Friends to refuse our consent for the following:

1. The mining and extraction of uranium;
2. Development, production or redesign of nuclear weapons;
3. Development or expansion of nuclear power plants;
4. Expansion of the quantity or type of nuclear wastes disposed at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, or any redefinitions of terms that would have the effect of such expansion;
5. Transport of high-level nuclear waste or nuclear materials such as fuel rods, plutonium pits, and similarly radioactive products on roads and railways;
6. Approval of the high-level nuclear waste storage facility proposed by Holtec, Inc. and promoted by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, or any other comparable plans for concentrated storage of high-level nuclear waste;
7. Any plans to export domestic nuclear waste for disposal in other countries; or
8. Any other plans or proposals regarding nuclear materials which would endanger the land, air and water of any region, put at risk the health and

livelihoods of those proximate to proposed sites, or encourage increased use of nuclear materials for weapons or for energy production.

Albuquerque Friends urge that nuclear wastes be made as secure as possible close to where they are currently located until effective means are discovered and developed for their transmutation into less hazardous forms. Only after neutralization is achieved would safe transport and safe long-term disposal sites be sought.

Albuquerque Friends also encourage the government of the United States and governments throughout the world, scientific research establishments, individual scientists, and all parts of the nuclear industry to give priority to, and provide adequate resources for, research into the safety and reduction of the radioactivity of materials such as enriched uranium, plutonium and other artificially enriched radioactive materials, so that they no longer pose so great a risk to land, water, air, animal life and human communities.

We recognize that nuclear energy production is not environmentally or economically sustainable when the full cycle of nuclear material extraction, modification, use and disposal is considered. With sincere respect for those who wish to increase reliance on nuclear power in generating electricity to reduce devastating degrees of climate change, Friends nonetheless conclude that increased use of nuclear power risks scattering equally disastrous widespread radioactive contamination of land, air and water and jeopardizes the health and livelihoods of many for the convenience of others.

Alternatives for meeting the energy needs of our nation and our world that are environmentally sustainable and honor our right relationship with our Indigenous and non-Indigenous neighbors are the only way forward. Worldwide there is promising research and application of alternatives such as wind, solar, geothermal, tidal, hydroelectric and other non-polluting, sustainable sources for global power and energy. Policies and programs to reduce demand are imperative.

The Clerk of Albuquerque Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) is authorized and urged to share the content and purposes of this minute in all appropriate settings on behalf of this Meeting. Members and attenders of Albuquerque Monthly Meeting are encouraged to reference this statement, in whole or in part, in their own personal statements regarding nuclear issues.

## **Background material**

**(may be updated with new information over time)**

Albuquerque Monthly Meeting of Friends find a dangerous interconnectedness between the different stages in the cycle of mining, production, use and disposal of radioactive materials. The following proposed plans exemplify this interconnectedness. Not only is each proposed plan a standalone element, it is also part of a larger picture that begins with extraction and continues through disposal.

1. Plans continue to be proposed to renew uranium mining, particularly in areas on or near the territory of Indigenous peoples. These plans threaten land, water and air for all people and particularly threaten the land, water, air, cultures and sovereignty of Indigenous peoples within the western United States and the State of New Mexico. Friends believe no civilian or military purpose can justify any additional mining of uranium.
2. Plans continue to develop new nuclear weapons and redesign existing weapons, including testing and producing fissionable materials such as plutonium pits to trigger thermonuclear weapons. These plans and proposals, often included in federal government and Pentagon budget proposals, betray all calls for peace and commitments to nonproliferation of nuclear weapons and nuclear disarmament. They increase the risks both that such weapons will be employed in warfare and that accidental leakage, unintended detonation or other accidental catastrophe will cause irreparable harm.
3. The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has proposed plans to expand both the amount and the radioactive level of nuclear wastes disposed deep underground at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) in southern New Mexico. These proposed expansions involve redefining the amount of waste disposed, allowing disposal of higher levels of wastes, expanding the underground disposal area, and other proposals designed to expand the actual amount and radioactive level of the wastes stored at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP,) and further increase the likelihood of WIPP becoming the permanent disposal site for more nuclear waste than the limits set by agreements with the State of New Mexico and by federal laws. Such plans endanger the land, air and water near the WIPP site and endanger every community through which nuclear waste headed for WIPP would travel. Such plans also support the military purposes for which so much of the waste is being created, disposing of nuclear contaminated materials so that new nuclear weapons material may be produced. In the past we have been assured about safety, and these past promises have been

broken. For example, we were assured that WIPP would be safe for thousands of years, and in 2014 several barrels exploded creating a contamination hazard for workers and the surrounding community.

4. Holtec, Inc., a private corporation, has announced plans to develop a site in southern New Mexico for the storage of high level nuclear waste, including all of the highly radioactive spent fuel rods from nuclear power plants in the U.S. This proposal has been promoted by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). The liability for the inevitable disaster is unclear in this proposal. This plan not only threatens to concentrate high-level nuclear waste in one place, but also anticipates the transport of highly radioactive materials, such as spent nuclear fuel rods, on our railways and roads and through cities and communities to their anticipated storage site in southern New Mexico. By disposing of this dangerous nuclear material in an area that is not a site of electricity production by nuclear power plants, this plan encourages the distant users of nuclear power to continue to produce new nuclear materials, thus contributing to the threat to other communities including indigenous peoples and others located near sites where uranium mining is proposed. Increased transport of high level nuclear waste poses an increased security risk for theft of such materials from rail yards in urban and rural areas. The best solution at this time is to continue to store the rods in place in hardened containment with as little transport as possible. Since this proposal is only for an interim storage site (to operate for 40 to 120 years) the proposal fails to address the ultimate issue: long term disposal. If there are no long-term disposal sites, the lands and peoples of New Mexico would again be a de facto nuclear dumping spot.
5. No immediate plans have been proposed, in the understanding of Albuquerque Friends, to transport nuclear wastes out of the country to other nations. However, plans for global storage of nuclear waste and its transport to other regions such as Indigenous regions of Australia continue to be discussed in the literature of nuclear regulatory bodies and the nuclear industry. Albuquerque Friends, in seeking to protect land, water, Indigenous peoples and sundry populated communities domestically do not condone any proposal to export our domestic nuclear wastes and our nuclear problems to any other country.