
Hit Lists Claim a Victim at EPA

Louis Cordia, the 28-year-old political operative at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) accused of drawing up a "hit list" of scientists out of favor with the Administration, was asked to resign on 15 March by the acting chief of EPA, John Hernandez. Cordia was a special assistant in the EPA office that coordinates environmental impact statements.

One week earlier, Cordia had denied preparing the hit list of scientists, although he said he vaguely recalled others like it (*Science* 18 Mar., p. 1303). Cordia's memory was refreshed when new information came to light on 14 March. Aides to Representative James Scheuer (D-N.Y.) announced that they had evidence that extensive and sophisticated political checklists were used at EPA. Furthermore, the lists came from material supplied by Cordia under subpoena.

Cordia still says that he did not write the original hit list, but concedes that he drew up "pro and con assessments of the performance of 600 to 700 EPA staff and consultants." This monster list, he says, was "one of four major efforts I undertook during the transition period and later at the Heritage Foundation." He left the foundation and joined EPA in November 1981. In addition to the checklist, he prepared 250 staff job recommendations, 300 policy papers, reorganization plans, and budget proposals. "That's the kind of work that transition teams are supposed to do," Cordia says, "and I did it very well."

Cordia would not comment on reports that he sent the personnel checklists to EPA counsel Robert Perry for Perry's use.—**ELIOT MARSHALL**

Burford Ignored Advice on DOE Reactor

Anne Burford, the former head of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), ignored the advice of EPA scientists and a regional administrator in dismissing the potential hazards associated with the L-reactor in South Carolina, according to recent EPA

documents. The reactor, which produces highly enriched plutonium for use in the weapons program, is considered essential to the success of the Reagan Administration's military buildup. But nearby residents are worried about potential radiation releases and water contamination, and have asked the Department of Energy (DOE) to prepare a formal environmental impact statement before the reactor is restarted late this year, after a 15-year hiatus (*Science*, 19 Nov. 1982, p. 774).

Burford, in a letter to Senator Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.) dated 28 January, said that there will be no significant adverse environmental effects from the restart. She also said that DOE made a correct decision not to prepare a formal impact statement.

This was, however, directly contrary to the views of scientists and officials in EPA's regional office in Atlanta. In a memo to Washington on the previous day, Charles Jeter, the regional administrator, recommended explicitly that EPA take no position on DOE's decision. We believe that the endorsement "should be deleted in [its] entirety," Jeter wrote in a review of Burford's letter.

Remarks by his staff in a series of internal memos were even stronger. Howard Zeller, the assistant regional administrator for policy and management, said that DOE's position was "seriously flawed." He noted that reactor operation would result in the seepage of mercury and chlorinated solvents into an aquifer beneath the plant site, posing a potential "threat of contamination to . . . drinking water wells" in the nearby town of Jackson. Lead, zinc, nickel, fluorine, and barium might also contaminate the area's water, according to other EPA scientists. The contamination might be in violation of the government's own hazardous waste laws.

The documents, which were first released by Senator Ernest F. Hollings (D-S.C.), also reveal that DOE's position is contrary to advice from the Council on Environmental Quality and from the Fish and Wildlife Service of the Interior Department. James Pulliam, the service's regulatory director, told DOE privately on 7 January that "we cannot agree with the finding of no significant impact" from the reactor restart. Pulliam suggested additional study of the impact on fish in the

adjacent Savannah River, and he urged that a formal impact statement be prepared.

DOE is, for now, refusing to budge.—**R. JEFFREY SMITH**

Industry Sets Conditions for Funding Clinch River

Private investors might be enticed to put up 40 percent of the funds required to complete the troubled Clinch River breeder reactor, according to a recent analysis prepared for the Department of Energy (DOE). The catch, however, is that the deal would require so many sweeteners that Congress is unlikely to go along.

The analysis was put together in response to a congressional demand that DOE find ways to get the private sector to shoulder more of the financial burden. At present, utility companies are contributing a mere \$347 million to a project whose total cost DOE estimates to be \$3.4 billion.

The plan, drawn up by a task force consisting of three utility executives and an investment banker, assumes that federal funding will remain at roughly current levels. That will be a surprise to many in Congress who were looking to private financing as a way to reduce federal outlays. Instead, private funds would only prevent federal contributions from rising.

The task force believes that the prospect of electricity sales from the completed plant should be sufficient to work out a financing arrangement under which private investors share in the proceeds. However, it suggests that the private sector could be counted on for only about \$800 million of the \$2.1 billion that DOE estimates will be required to complete the plant.

Even this contribution, moreover, will require assurances from Congress that funds will be appropriated to finish the plant, and the quantity and price of the electricity to be sold may have to be guaranteed by the federal government. Investors may also require special tax breaks.

Initial reaction to the plan on Capitol Hill has been decidedly cool. Senator Gordon Humphrey (R-N.H.), a conservative critic of the project, has called it "ill-advised and potentially disastrous."—**COLIN NORMAN**