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Responsibility of this Generation for Nuclear Waste

The Swedish government and nuclear industry have taken the position that the current generation should “solve” the nuclear waste problem. The reasoning is that it is this generation that has benefited from the nuclear technology that generated the waste and that the problem should not be passed on to future generations.

The aspect of whose responsibility it is for producing the waste in the first place is rarely brought up. Stress is put on the fact that no matter what one thinks about nuclear power, there is waste that has to be dealt with. The issue of more and more waste being produced daily is avoided.

Even if the Swedish nuclear industry is able to achieve its most optimistic schedule, the earliest a facility holding all the currently projected volume of radiated nuclear fuel could be sealed is about the year 2060. According to the Oxford dictionary a generation is usually considered about 30 years. As the majority of the current generation of politicians and staff in the nuclear industry are middle-aged and beyond, after them there will be an additional two or three generations that would have to deal with getting to the point of sealing the facility.

However, as the waste is dangerous for over 100,000 years, even if the production of more waste is stopped immediately and an isolation method and site chosen as soon as possible, the hazards and location of the waste should be perpetually passed on to future generations. Otherwise, there is a risk of contamination due to accidental or deliberate exposure. The waste problem can thus never be “solved” in the sense of being over and done with and never having to be thought of again.

The greatest responsibility of this generation regarding nuclear waste is to stop making it!

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