

Garvis M. Pollard Jr. - It is a distinct pleasure for me to be here today on behalf of The State of Arizona Atomic Energy Commission to participate in "Waste Management '75." I appreciate the opportunity to present these few remarks. Let me begin by thanking those of you in attendance, not for coming to Tucson, Arizona, this time of year -- you're probably thanking Dr. Post for that -- but rather, let me thank you for the many, many years of technical expertise, for the long, arduous hours of work, and for the tremendous amount of knowledge that you people represent here today with respect to radioactive waste management. You're to be applauded for your attempts at solving the many technical problems associated with this area. Yet, as I stated at this same conference last year .. you may be winning the battles on the broad plains of technology, but you're losing the war in the trenches of public opinion.. Therein lies

the problem for discussion this afternoon.

The field of science and technology, it seems, has historically seen its role as a seeker of truth, but not necessarily seen its role as a purveyor of that truth outside its own discipline. The Feb. 27 issue of Info, The Public Affairs and Information Newsletter of the Atomic Industrial Forum, began by stating, and I quote, "Nuclear Power is no longer a localized technical or public acceptance problem for individual utilities, but a national social question that will be solved through the political process." Finally, perhaps, the nuclear community is beginning to understand. You see..when the public asks a simple question, it merely wants a simple answer. The simple question it asks is, "what are you going to do with your radioactive waste formed in the generation of electricity from nuclear power plants?" And the answer is...well, what really is the answer? Each of us can perhaps give a 30 to 90 minute discourse on what can be done with high level radioactive waste. We can place it into retrievable surface storage facilities, or we can bury in geologic formations, or we can use it for some beneficial purpose. Of course, we can finally say, it appears that present technology and political considerations would dictate that a retrievable surface storage facility be used..etc.. But let me remind you that the public will not be rebuffed. This is a question they've been asking for many years now. They've seldom been given a complete, candid and licid answer. You may rest assured, however, that the day of patting members of the general public on the head and saying, "there, there, now...don't worry... Precautions are being taken by those who know.." That day is gone. We, of course, know that today, there really is no simple answer to what will be done with nuclear waste. That appears now to be a political decision based, we hope, on knowledgeable weighing of benefits vs. risks. But the public, the electorate, does deserve an answer. And it deserves all the facts ..even the adverse facts..even when they're not asked for. As we have seen time and time again, information, when too little and too

late, can cause much more damage than full, honest and open disclosure from the beginning. The loss of public confidence is never easily restored. It's time to establish some credibility somewhere, because, to reiterate, the public will no longer allow themselves to be patronized.

In this area, what role can a state agency play? The state of Arizona Atomic Energy Commission, by statute, conducts a public information program with respect to nuclear energy. With meager resources, but the state must also protect the public interest. It must act as disinterestedly, as benevolently, and as rationally as possible in the field of nuclear energy. All the facts must be presented, and they must be presented in as reasonably objective a manner as possible. The state can function as a clearinghouse between representatives of the government, such as the governor and the legislature, and members of the public. And, since the media appears, in large part, to lack the in-house, scientific expertise for understanding the technical news that it reports, the state can serve as a valuable intermediary in providing factual, objective, scientific information to serve the public's best interest. The states collectively can function to insure that constant liaison be maintained with agencies or individuals of the various states so that the public information and public participation can proceed to the very lowest levels.

Just as we are, today, I think, equally concerned with our automobile's safety features, on the one hand, and its gas mileage, on the other. We are also equally concerned with our electric utility's rate structure in keeping our electric bills low, on the one hand, and the consequent health and environmental risks in the generation of that electrical energy we need. The public can make surprisingly intelligent decisions given all the facts. This state stands ready to help its public by giving them all those facts.