

The French National Radioactive Waste Management Agency (ANDRA) kept lying in court: Summary of the court hearing on January 5th, 2015

Following a lawsuit by six concerned citizen groups (*ASODEDRA, BureStop55, Cedra52, Habitants Vigilants de Gondrecourt-le-Château, MIRABEL - Lorraine Nature Environnement, Réseau "Sortir du nucléaire"*), on January the 5th, ANDRA was called to the Superior Court of Nanterre [near Paris].

We sued ANDRA for the offense of hiding data on the geothermal resource of the Bure site for more than 15 years. This geothermal energy resource impedes the construction of a nuclear waste disposal site there, as it might lead to drilling through the wastes. Our lawyer demonstrated that ANDRA willingly failed to execute its duty to honestly inform the public. As a public agency, it is compelled to do so by law. Attorney Etienne Ambroselli said, "We want to stop ANDRA from practicing the art of misinformation. We expect the court to condemn ANDRA for not telling the truth about the difficulties it has encountered in carrying out its mission to manage nuclear wastes over the long term.

The misinformation went on during the legal procedures before the hearing. ANDRA did not produce any new arguments; the weaknesses of these had been emphasized in the citizen groups' replications before the hearing. Stuck in this awkward position, ANDRA now has to modify its message with further misinformation. While it had declared there was no geothermal potential, it now recognizes there is. Henceforth, to elude the problem of safety, ANDRA now says it would be possible to tap the geothermal brine near the site, but this would not affect the safety of the site. Henceforth, according to ANDRA's attorney, incidentally drilling through the wastes would release only one hundredth the amount of natural radioactivity! It appears that there is nothing to worry about with these high-level long lived wastes, which raises an interesting question: why bury them if they are so inconsequential? As for the Safety Rules [Règle Fondamentale de Sûreté, RFS III.2.f, then, Guide de Sûreté 2008 of the French legislation] they would be meaningless...

When the memory of the waste dump will have faded, people of the future might wish to take advantage of the earth's thermal energy, and drilling operations might contact the wastes (this is quite possible considering the decline of fossil resources). The future generations will be the victims. It would be irresponsible for our leaders to give the go-ahead to such a project.

Without new arguments, ANDRA's attorney could not justify the malfeasance and unacceptable malfunctions which happened during ANDRA'S drilling in the geothermal investigation. He only pretended that such problems (anomalous obstruction of the tool by mud, inability to conduct sufficiently long hydraulic testing, inappropriate sampling and temperature recording...) would be the "usual" problems encountered in such a task.

The judgment will be given March the 27th at 14h. We hope the court will recognize the obvious strengths of the plea brought forward by our concerned-citizens groups.