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Reno Public Meeting
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JAN CHASTAIN: My name is Jan Chastain,

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15 C-h-a-s-t-a-i-n. I'm the editor of the Independent
16 Nevada Democratic News, and also I do Jackrabbit Video
17 Productions.

18 I wanted to bring to you some information I
19 gleaned from Project Sensor, which some of you know has
20 gone extensively into nuclear waste across the country
21 and into the quality of reporting that's been done around
22 nuclear waste.

23 Project Sensor is out of Sonoma State
24 University. It's run by some very qualified journalists
25 from different universities who come there and they

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1 gather journalism students who select the stories that
2 have not been reported or have been underreported that
3 most effect the American public, and then they put that
4 out every year in their book Project Sensor.

5 Anyway, about a dozen years ago, Neil
6 Postman of NYU said that the United States has the best
7 entertained, the least informed people in the world, and
8 let me explain how I agree with that.

9 In Ward Valley near Needles, California, a
10 McNeil-Lehrer reporter -- that's for PBS, supposed to be

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11 the best and the top line -- said he could only get part
12 of the story that he did on the PBS show and that the
13 parts that were cut were the parts cutting the rather --
14 that showed the rather questionable track record of the
15 low-level nuclear waste dump contractor for the site
16 there in Ward Valley. That was all edited out. As a
17 video editor, I can tell you it's easy to do that. What
18 was left were the strangest local speakers for the
19 opposition. No one was left in the aired program who
20 spoke about the facts for the opposition and the edited
21 result was that the opposition was kind of nutty.

22 We're interested in the story for many
23 reasons, not the least of which is because it is the same
24 kind of nuclear waste dump we have already here in
25 Nevada.

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1 Back to California's Ward Valley warnings, it
2 clearly showed how the press is controlled by the nuclear
3 waste industry when not even PBS would air a fair report
4 on the issue.

5 There was tremendous concern at the time in
6 California of whether this low-level waste dump would be
7 safe, how long it would remain safe, what kind of design

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8 it should have and whether or not it should even be
9 built, yet none of this was shown on the PBS program
10 McNeil-Lehrer.

11 Now, California's Ward Valley was strongly
12 supported by the U.S. Government and by the nuclear power
13 industry, and as we said, Peter Growlman, the journalist,
14 his story included the original story, included facts
15 from both sides, yet the PBS thing, as I said, they
16 deleted the entire segment describing the storage
17 facility. You will find more information on your
18 homeowner's insurance policy than they had on this show.

19 Truth is, this facility is unlined pits to
20 hold barrels of nuclear waste. The barrels in the
21 unlined pits are covered with dirt. Wells are drilled
22 around the perimeter to monitor leakage.

23 We also need to remember this: The hazardous
24 life of nuclear waste -- and I'm sure you've heard a lot
25 of this -- lasts from a few months to millions of years.

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1 I like to talk about plutonium. The body mistakes
2 plutonium, you know, for calcium and it absorbs it like
3 it's calcium. The plutonium is then stored in the liver
4 where it gives you a nice case of liver cancer, almost

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5 always fatal. Also crosses the placenta barrier, which
6 few things do. If I die of plutonium poisoning and if
7 I'm cremated and my ashes go up the chimney and you
8 breathe them, you'll have plutonium poisoning, and my
9 ashes will remain infectious for millions of years.

10 Let's get back to the Ward Valley story.

11 Also cut out of that story was the part that told of
12 leaks at other waste sites, including those run by U.S.
13 Ecology, the operator of the proposed Ward Valley site.

14 Example number one: The PBS story deleted
15 the part that told about the nuclear waste dump at West
16 Valley, New York, which was closed in 1972 after
17 radioactivity leaked into surrounding soil. Cleanup
18 there is estimated at just millions.

19 Example number two: The PBS story deleted
20 the part that told how at Maxey Flats, Kentucky,
21 rainwater seeped in and spread radioactive isotopes
22 around the dump. Now this site is run by U.S. Ecology,
23 it was taken over by the State, and Maxey Flats is now on
24 the federal cleanup list. There go your tax dollars.

25 All these facts were deleted from the
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1 opponent's story, the opponents of the Ward Valley site
2 story, and only the shrillest voices, the most general

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3 statements, the ladies wearing the craziest hats made the
4 cut. They made the residents of Needles, California look
5 like kooks and no one to be taken seriously alongside the
6 sober-sided, serious, fact-spouting government officials.

7 We all know nuclear waste disposal is huge
8 business. Does everyone realize it's also syndicate
9 business? And that makes it interesting to Nevadans, I
10 think. We all know nuclear waste is also a huge, huge
11 business, huge business, means that threats to public
12 health go unreported or are reported with misleading
13 language on major networks because the networks are owned
14 by defense industries who also produce nuclear waste.

15 These same industries sit on newspaper boards
16 and have been known again and again by Project Sensor to
17 do each other's covering up. It's quite a family.

18 Frances Sierra's story -- she was a
19 journalist for the New York Times -- she wrote a story on
20 LIUCO, the Long Island Utility Company, which built a
21 nuclear plant and just really mismanaged it, and they
22 were about to go bankrupt. I don't want to go into all
23 the story. I just want to tell you that the damn thing
24 was spiked. She was run out of the New York Times.

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25 Sierra said there is not freedom of the press -- this is
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1 what she learned -- unless you own the paper or the TV

2 station.

3 And I want to repeat what Neil Postman said:

4 The U.S. has the best entertained and the least informed

5 population in the world.

6 Thank you.