

term feasibility of nuclear energy.

It remains to be seen how the Minnesota Legislature will decide the Prairie Island case next year—or whether the power company will appeal the decision to the Supreme Court. PICANS Communications Director Bruce Drew says that his group plans to launch a large-scale grass-roots campaign to win their case, one which he believes will “pioneer this issue” for local communities fighting similar initiatives.

In Nevada, meanwhile, activists continue to fight the government’s attempts to open the world’s first permanent high-level radioactive waste dump. Bob Fulkerson, executive director of Citizen Alert in Reno, fears that the DOE is determined to build the Yucca Mountain dump to fulfill its 40-year-old promise to the nuclear industry to take the waste—in spite of an earthquake that shook the site in June 1992 and a 1993 state-sponsored report that said the buried waste would release unsafe quantities of radioactive carbon dioxide.

Of course, shutting down nuclear power plants is the ultimate goal of most groups working against both centralized and decentralized forced-siting initiatives. But some groups believe that it is better strategically to address specific storage and disposal concerns rather than condemn the entire nuclear industry, which has enormous political clout both locally and in Washington, D.C. “Lake Michigan Federation is neither pro- nor anti-nuclear,” says LMF attorney Bruce Johnson. “We’re pro-Lake Michigan.”

Others believe that the DOE will continue to look for the most politically vulnerable community—to site the waste as long as production continues. Trying to raise the debate above individual charges of “not in my back yard,” Mary Olson, who works on the Radioactive Waste Project at the Nuclear Information and Resource Service in Washington, D.C., urges people to challenge the NRC’s longstanding record as a cooperator with, rather than a regulator of, the nuclear industry. “The fundamental question is not on-site storage versus centralized disposal,” she said. “It is: who gets to make these decisions, and who are they accountable to.”

—Shea Dean

## A HEALTHY DEBATE

*Administration official faces single-payer health advocates*

ing the support of 3 million members, the populist Citizen Action network has been the leading grass-roots voice for national health insurance on the Canadian, single-payer model.

Magaziner has been crafting the still-unfinished administration proposal for “managed competition” among health plans purchased through regional “health alliances.” He told organizers gathered in Chicago in mid-July that “the places we differ are relatively small compared to where we agree.”

The rhetoric and many points of the plan as outlined by Magaziner did converge with what Citizen Action and other single-payer advocates have urged. But it was obvious from the tough questions and audience reaction that Magaziner has not yet won over the group.

“We need each other,” he told the meeting. “There are a lot of people in Washington and Congress who don’t want health care reform.”

“Get rid of them,” came a shout from the audience.

Ira Magaziner, the head of Hillary and Bill Clinton’s health care reform commission, came to the 20th Midwest Academy/Citizen Action convention with a plea. With 34 state organizations claim-

## MEDIA BEAT

By Pat Aufderheide

### The violent wasteland

“Due to some violent content, parental discretion advised.” A warning sticker—that’s all TV execs, worried about congressional ire, are willing to do to recognize that violent programs affect children. It may not seem like much, but it’s a major breakthrough in an industry that has steadfastly denied—in the face of decades of evidence—any anti-social consequences of TV violence.

But don’t fear that TV will suddenly become an oasis of peaceful play. TV officials have promised that non-gratuitous violence will endure. In what seems an unintentional admission of prime time’s desertification, CBS’s Howard Stringer said, “We don’t want to turn the vast wasteland into the dull wasteland.”

At a meeting this month, industry officials will decide the exact terms of the new warning system.

### All the news that fits

The *New York Times* loves the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)—just look at its editorial page. Its business section loves the trade treaty too, and has organized “a series of special advertorials” on its behalf. (“Advertorials” are discrete sections whose content—usually designed separately—harmonizes with the ads.) As a *Times* letter soliciting ads—obtained by watchdog group Public Citizen—explains, “many Americans require further understanding if they are to be supportive of free trade and anti-protectionism.” The

advertorials are intended to "educate the public and influence Washington decision makers." The *Times* doesn't want to confuse people, either. Opponents of the treaty, like the AFL-CIO and Public Citizen, have been shut out of the advertorial section. And so, as a letter circulated by prominent media scholars led by Todd Gitlin says, "The nation's most influential paper has transformed its editorial viewpoint into an advertising campaign, crowded out counter-arguments and skewed an important public debate."

### Public interest, '90s-style

It's official—home shopping via television is now in the public interest. (After all, it makes it much easier for the physically challenged to purchase zirconium jewelry.) That's what the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) decided when it recently ruled that cablers would have to put home-shopping channels on their systems. The "must-carry" provision had been designed for broadcasters who still perform old-fashioned gestures toward the "public interest, convenience and necessity" that justify their licenses—gestures such as news, public service announcements and community-oriented programming. The FCC ruling is already putting money into motion: the Home Shopping Channel, beset by allegations of corruption, is toying with a merger offer from rival QVC. Meanwhile, many public interest advocates see the ruling as an ominous precedent, further erosion of the meaning of the public interest as technologies change.

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"That's your job," Magaziner replied.

Citizen Action chairman Ira Arlook said that, much as Citizen Action would like to support the administration, Hillary Rodham Clinton "and others in the White House run the risk of proposing something we can't support." Some administration leaders think "we will have to support it because we have nowhere else to go," Arlook said. "This would be a serious, serious miscalculation."

Leaders of statewide affiliates and other Citizen Action organizers argued that they could persuade their members to back a plan only if, as Illinois Public Action director Robert Creamer said, "it will provide more benefits at lower cost" than what they have now. The only way to overcome insurance industry influence "is for the president to go over the head of Congress and mobilize intense support," Creamer argued.

For his part, Magaziner said that the administration was committed to seven principles that single-payer supporters shared: universal coverage, comprehensive benefits, affordability, accountability, improved access in now-underserved areas and reduced bureaucracy.

Cathy Hurwitt, Citizen Action's lead health care organizer, has had easy access to Magaziner, and the organization's pressure has helped shape the administration plan. Yet it's not clear others in the administration share Magaziner's conviction that the White House needs strong grass-roots support.

Even as it tries to influence the Clintons, Citizen Action is planning nationwide accountability sessions between citizens and members of Congress for early October. At these forums, the group plans to press for support of the American Health Security Act, introduced by Sen. Paul Wellstone (D-MN) and by Rep. Jim McDermott (D-WA). One-third of House Democrats have signed on as co-sponsors.

Wellstone, who also addressed the 1,200 convention delegates, urged the group to keep up the pressure. Failure could doom not only national health insurance but a broader national politics, Wellstone argued. "This is going to be an issue that centrally defines American politics."

—David Moberg

## ROUGH CUTS

By JA Reid

### Stupor Market Sweep

