

No. S-95-13  
Tel. 301-415-8200  
Internet:OPA@NRC.Gov

Remarks by  
Dr. Shirley Ann Jackson, Commissioner  
United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
on the Occasion of  
her Swearing-In Ceremony  
by the Vice President of the United States  
May 26, 1995

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I am honored and deeply moved by this occasion. First of all, I want to give my heartfelt thanks to you, Mr. Vice President, for making this so memorable a day in my life. I promise to keep my remarks on this occasion, which means so much to me and my family, to an absolute minimum.

I want to thank all of you here today for your great support and encouragement in my becoming a Commissioner of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. In addition, I am honored that the President has selected me to serve as Chairman of the NRC beginning July 1 and I am looking forward with eager anticipation to assumption of this major new responsibility. I know that much effort has been expended on my behalf; and I feel that the best way I can reward your confidence in me is by devoting my utmost to the responsibilities that have been entrusted to me.

I see great challenges facing the nation, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and the enterprises it regulates in the years ahead. However, my personal philosophy, developed by the values which I received from my wonderful parents, has taught me to treat challenges as opportunities. I am new to the agency and accordingly, will take a fresh look at the issues before the NRC. However, I would be remiss if I did not recognize the strides made by the Commission in recent years, and in particular, to recognize the inspired leadership of Chairman Ivan Selin and his fellow Commissioners, Dr. Kenneth Rogers and Dr. Gail de Planque.

The overriding mission of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission is safety. Safety in the commercial applications and uses of nuclear energy and materials. That is the agency's priority and that is my priority.

What is important here is how we, on the Commission, carry out our statutory mandate for protection of the public health and safety and the environment, and responsibilities for the common defense and security. In meeting our responsibilities, I believe that strong and effective regulation requires independence between us, as regulators, and the industry we regulate. However, I believe that appropriate communication between us is important. I also am committed to openness in our proceedings as the best way of maintaining public confidence. We on the Commission must also be efficient and wise in our use of our resources so that we can avoid waste and only impose regulatory burdens on the industry we regulate to the extent warranted by the requirements of protection of the public health and safety, and the environment.

Despite my brief tenure with the Commission, before I close, I should touch on at least a couple of the specifics which are of such obvious importance as to, at least, deserve mention here.

Two areas in which I know you, Mr. Vice President, have been personally involved, and which are of special importance to me, also, are the efforts in regulatory reform begun under your National Performance Review, and NRC's participation, through your joint commission with Russia, in efforts to improve reactor safety there, and in all of the former Soviet Union. I will give my full support to these initiatives.

Also in the international arena, the NRC has begun nuclear safety dialogues with countries which are beginning to use or are contemplating the use of U.S. nuclear technology. Our purpose in offering assistance is to ensure the development of a strong and independent, effective, regulatory environment similar to that which we have in the United States. I believe that following a constructive course in building relationships with emphasis on nuclear safety with developing countries will provide a positive environment, with benefits for U.S. nuclear exports.

As I assume my responsibilities, I am mindful of the need to maintain reactor safety as our preeminent task, as the inevitable problems of aging are confronted in the nuclear power industry, which contributes more than 20 percent of the electricity used in our economy. As the NRC is asked to renew the licenses of older plants, the standard is clear-cut: licenses should be renewed where licensees can demonstrate, without question, that their facilities can continue to operate safely beyond their present licensed period.

The last issue I would underscore is that of safe nuclear waste storage and disposal. The public is concerned about this issue; the Congress is concerned about this issue; and I am concerned about this issue. The proposed nuclear waste

repository program, as we all know, has been delayed. However, it is important, for the NRC, to maintain the appropriate safety perspective here. It is not the role of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to specify the appropriate option for nuclear storage and disposal. But, it is our responsibility, at the NRC, to ensure that whatever approach is finally adopted -- whether it is extended on-site storage of spent fuel, extended off-site storage in consolidated facilities, and ultimately disposal in a geologic repository -- that that approach meets the highest standards of safety.

Let me conclude by saying I am greatly honored to accept the challenge of service on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and pledge to be fully committed to achieving the highest standards of public service. Thank you again, Mr. Vice President, distinguished guests and colleagues, and most especially: my loving family - my husband and son, my parents, my sisters, my brothers-in-law and my nephews - and friends, for your support, as I begin this endeavor.

#