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CONSOLIDATED EDISON COMPANY OF NEW YORK, INC.

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J. F. FAIRMAN
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT

June 10-1959

Mr Harold L Price, Director
Division of Licensing and Regulation
U. S. Atomic Energy Commission
Washington 25, D C

Dear Sir

You have invited comments (24 F.R. 4184, May 23, 1959) on "safety factors" which "might be" the basis for the "development" of site criteria for power and test reactors.

Although the statement referred to is identified as a notice of proposed rule-making it seems clear from the phrases quoted above and from the tone of the statement generally that no final decision has been made as to the adoption of any site criteria at this time. We wish to direct our remarks primarily to this fundamental question rather than to the specific factors under consideration.

Everyone agrees that nuclear power is still in an experimental stage. No reactor type has yet been declared to be suitable for commercial licensing under Section 103 of the Atomic Energy Act. Nor have nuclear engineers agreed upon any reactor types as the most promising for commercial or industrial use. On the contrary, a number of reactor types are still in the course of active and competitive development. In each instance -- and even in variations within a reactor type -- individual design features and individual reactivity containment plans may make a great difference in the weight to be given to site criteria. Until the comparable operating characteristics of different reactors are better understood, it would seem to be impracticable, unwise and damaging to the sound evolution of reactor technology to establish quantitative site criteria by regulation.

There is no contention made here that the evaluation of site factors is not appropriate and vital in the consideration by the Commission of particular cases. Such an evaluation however is only one of many determinants entering into the judgment of the Commission and of its expert advisors, the members of the Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards. It is the balancing of all these factors in the individual case that is required. Later, when the experimental phase of the technology has ended, it may well be possible to establish quantitative site criteria by general regulation. It is too soon to do so now.

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Comments*

Mr Harold L Price

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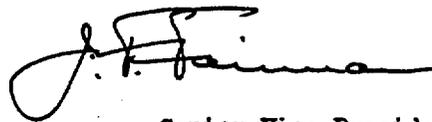
Even if it were feasible to establish such site criteria now, there are serious questions regarding the particular factors presently under consideration. The operating life of a reactor might run to 20 or 30 years. Populations expand rapidly and often haphazardly and no assurance could be given that any requirement of population density which could be satisfied in 1959 could also be satisfied in 1969. Obviously, an applicant would have no control over population movement or over decisions to construct airfields or factories in the vicinity of a reactor already in operation. It should also be noted that the owner of a reactor located on water (usually essential from the operating standpoint) cannot possibly acquire exclusive control of the area suggested if navigable water is involved.

The application of the factors listed in the proposed rule might well preclude the operation of any power reactor in an area where its commercial feasibility could be demonstrated.

In principle, the search of the Commission for standards on reactor location, as well as on specifications for reactor design, is admirable. But inherent in the term "standards" are connotations of knowledge and of experience which simply do not yet exist in this new technology. To fix general standards prematurely is to incorporate into a particular regulatory process inadequate information and experience and thereby handicap sound development.

For the reasons stated it is most earnestly urged that the Commission defer for the present further consideration of the adoption by regulation of site criteria or safety factors specifically related to reactor location.

Sincerely yours



Senior Vice President

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