



STATE OF ARKANSAS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
State Capitol
Little Rock 72201

Bill Clinton
Governor

August 31, 1987

The Honorable Lando W. Zech, Jr., Chairman
Nuclear Regulatory Commission
1717 H Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20555

Dear Chairman Zech:

I am writing to address a serious problem that has developed in the past few months. This problem is the erosion of public confidence in the ability of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to safeguard the public adequately from the dangers of nuclear power plant accidents.

Arkansas Power and Light Company operates two reactors, Unit One and Two of Arkansas Nuclear One (ANO), near Russellville, Arkansas in the West Central section of our state. The people in this area are vulnerable to the hazards of nuclear power accidents. As Governor of the State of Arkansas, I feel that it is my responsibility to do everything that I can to assure their safety.

On both the national and local level, there appears to be a developing cynicism as to the safety of nuclear power and the ability of the NRC to assure the safety of these facilities. This public concern can be noted from a series of developments, including the following:

1. In January of this year, the National Research Council asked the NRC to correct what it perceived as organizational difficulties at the Commission.
2. In February of this year, the Union of Concerned Scientists filed a Petition with the NRC requesting that it shut down Unit One of ANO and all other reactors built by Babcock and Wilcox. A local environmental group, the Arkansas Alliance, joined in that petition as well as several other Arkansas groups and individuals. Arkansas Senators Dale Bumpers and David Pryor have requested the NRC to take action on the concerns raised by the Union of Concerned Scientists.
3. Residents living in the vicinity of ANO have expressed concerns that the safety precautions taken are meaningless without an effective evacuation program.

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4. The public's confidence in the ability of NRC officials to deal with safety problems uncovered at reactors has been eroded by allegations that persons within the NRC have leaked information to a utility.

5. The District of Columbia Court of Appeals has recently held that an NRC-promulgated rule was inappropriate in that it considered costs in setting safety requirements.

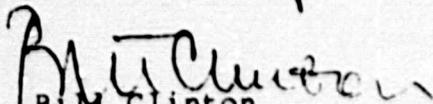
While I do not believe that either AP&L or the NRC would intentionally sacrifice safety, there is a growing concern that by balancing the safety and the cost of safety at nuclear plants, the Commission has a tendency to side with the utility in many cases at the expense of the public safety.

The safety of the Babcock and Wilcox reactors such as Unit One of Arkansas Nuclear One must be proven before public confidence in nuclear power can be restored. The concerns addressed by the UCS have not been addressed by the NRC at this time. It is imperative that they are fully and completely addressed. If the reactors must be shut down and modified, then let's go ahead and do it. If they are safe, then let us know.

Political considerations, administrative convenience, and economic expediency cannot motivate a national policy for nuclear safety. As one member of the UCS stated recently, nuclear plants must be run safely or not at all. Economic resources cannot be compared with human suffering or injury.

I urge you to address the concerns of the Union of Concerned Scientists. Nuclear power is an important source of energy in the State of Arkansas and revocation of the licenses of the plants would be an extreme hardship for Arkansans. However, steps must be taken to assure these plants' safety in a timely manner and to restore the public's confidence in nuclear power.

Sincerely,


Bill Clinton

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