



UNITED STATES  
ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20545

50-247

FEB 17 1967

Dear Senator Williams:

I am pleased to furnish information in response to your referral of January 17, 1967, which enclosed a copy of a letter to you from Mr. Larry Bogart, Director of The Conservation Center, New York City, together with a reprint of an article published in the December 1966 issue of The Rotarian.

The development of power reactors for peaceful use has over the years progressed with the paramount consideration of public health and safety built in from the very beginning. The current increase in nuclear power plant projects reflects industry's confidence both in the economics of nuclear power and in the record of safe operating experience that has been accumulated to date. Before any nuclear power plant can be undertaken, all radiological safety factors -- in which siting considerations are an integral part -- must be thoroughly evaluated and approved in the AEC's licensing process.

The Commission's Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards, as required by law, reviews all power reactor construction permit applications. That Committee reviewed the Indian Point Unit 2 application and recommended it for approval.

Our copy of a transcript of Dr. Edward Teller's testimony of January 10, 1967, at the air pollution conference in New York City shows that he recommended exploration of the possibility of locating reactors underground -- particularly with reference to building such plants within cities -- as another possible method of achieving safety. But he spoke favorably of the present system of multiple safeguards.

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FEB 17 1967

being applied to above-ground nuclear reactors. In fact, Dr. Teller emphasized that a study of underground reactors "should not interfere with immediate and existing plans to build more reactors, according to the present good practice."

We are not able to comment on Mr. Bogart's reference to unnamed "experts" who have "cautioned against locating nuclear reactors on major rivers." In the case of Indian Point Unit 2 -- as with other power reactors -- the plans had to meet the requirements of the AEC's criteria for siting. The application was evaluated and reported on favorably by both the AEC regulatory staff and the Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards. Finally, an atomic safety and licensing board conducted a public hearing on the matter and, on October 3, 1966, issued a favorable decision which directed the issuance of a construction permit. The Commission itself, in its review of the proceeding, was satisfied that the record supported the board's findings and conclusions in accordance with the Commission's regulations.

We regret that Mr. Bogart believes that "a group of citizens can't be heard," which apparently refers to the board's denial of a petition by The Conservation Center to intervene in the proceeding. The record of the proceeding shows that Mr. Bogart was in communication with the AEC well in advance of the publicly announced hearing and that he was informed of the procedures required for intervention. Nevertheless, no attempt was made by The Conservation Center to comply with the Commission's Rules of Practice, for timely and proper intervention, and the board consequently denied the petition. Subsequently, on October 21, 1966, the Commission received an "Appeal from Initial Decision, Exceptions and Brief in Support Thereof" from The Conservation Center. A copy of the Commission's memorandum and order of December 20, 1966, denying the appeal and describing the circumstances is enclosed for your information.

Senator Williams

- 3 -

FEB 17 1967

Finally, with regard to the reprint of the article, "Atomic Power and the Problems of Public Safety," which appeared in the December 1966 issue of The Rotarian, we note that many of the statements attributed to Mr. Adolph Ackerman are the same points raised in his testimony before the Joint Congressional Committee on Atomic Energy during its June 1965 hearings on indemnity legislation. Our comments concerning Mr. Ackerman's testimony were furnished to the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy following those hearings, and are summarized in the enclosed copy of a letter from the director of AEC's Division of Public Information to the editor of The Rotarian.

In keeping with the AEC's rules in licensing proceedings, a copy of your letter with enclosures and this reply have been placed in the Commission's Public Document Room.

If you should need further information on this matter, let me know.

Cordially,

*s/ Glenn T. Seaborg*

Chairman

Honorable Harrison Williams  
United States Senate

Enclosures:

1. Memo of Order dtd 12/20/66
2. Memo fr John Harris, DPI dtd 12/14/66