

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

November 15, 1983

Honorable Nunzio J. Pallidino
Chairman
Nuclear Regulatory Commission
1717 H Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20555

Dear Joe,

I am writing to express my great concern about permitting fuel loading and low-power licensing of Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant while significant health and safety issues remain unresolved. I'm particularly concerned that the NRC decided to reinstate the plant's low-power license before completing design quality assurance hearings and despite new evidence suggesting serious defects in the quality assurance program for plant construction.

When Congress granted the NRC authority to issue interim operating licenses to nuclear plants before completing all hearings, it did so to deal with a very specific problem: anticipated delays in licensing several plants caused by the reallocation of NRC staff following the Three Mile Island accident. This authority was clearly intended to handle a temporary administrative backlog, not as a way to circumvent the NRC's established hearing process.

The problems Pacific Gas and Electric has experienced in licensing this facility have resulted from repeated revelations of serious design flaws affecting the safety and reliability of this particular plant, not from delays in the hearing process. Indeed, the NRC's hearing process has thus far worked well in carrying out its responsibility to protect public safety in the case of this plant. The suspension of Diablo Canyon's fuel loading and low-power license resulted directly from such revelations. The administrative conditions warranting issuance of an interim license to this facility no longer exist, if indeed they ever did exist.

That the Commission would proceed to licensing hearings despite new evidence indicating a major breakdown in the quality assurance program of one of the plant's principal contractors while the plant was under construction, without formally addressing this new evidence, can only increase public fears about the plant's safety and raise doubts about NRC's objectivity.

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I urge the Commission review this new information and complete all hearings before licensing Diablo Canyon for operation. Because of this particular plant's checkered history, failure to do so only serves to undermine the confidence of people living near the plant in the integrity of the hearing process and foster an impression that the hearings are not an adequate forum for careful, fair consideration of the many difficult issues which should determine the licensing decision.

With best wishes,

Cordially,



Alan Cranston

