

REGULATORY DOCKET FILE COPY

JUN 26 1980

Mrs. David Deutsch
R. #1
Utica, Illinois 61373

Dear Mrs. Deutsch:

This is in reply to your letter of April 5, 1979, to President Carter about nuclear power. I am sorry for the long delay in responding, but we have been very busy with the aftermath of the Three Mile Island accident.

You asked why there are seven nuclear power plants operating in Illinois out of a total of seventy for the whole country. The seven plants in Illinois are operated by the Commonwealth Edison Co. Reasons for using nuclear power are given in the enclosed excerpt from the 1979 Annual Report of Commonwealth Edison Co. in a message to stockholders from the Chairman of the company.

With regard to the facility at Morris, Illinois, this is the Morris Fuel Storage Installation of the General Electric Co. It was originally built to process spent fuel from nuclear power plants, but was not used for that purpose. Instead, it was converted to be used for storage of spent fuel. The General Electric Co. has applied for renewal of its license for the receipt and storage of spent fuel there, and an Atomic Safety and Licensing Board of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission is conducting hearings on this application.

You asked why construction permits for a nuclear power plants are so easily obtainable. Actually, the issuance of a construction permit requires a long and thorough treatment of both safety and environmental factors by the applicant and review by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, including a mandatory public hearing by a three-member Atomic Safety and Licensing Board. This licensing process is described in the attached excerpt from the 1979 Annual Report of the NRC.

You asked why so many nuclear power stations are being built when only seventy supply our current needs. The purpose of nuclear power stations is to supply electricity for residential, commercial, and industrial uses. As the need for electrical energy increases, more power stations of some kind have to be built. Where nuclear stations have been chosen by utilities, it has been mainly because their fuel costs are lower and their environmental impacts are less than for coal or oil. For example, enclosed is an excerpt from the NRC Final Environmental Statement of November 1977 related to construction of the Yellow Creek Nuclear Plant by the Tennessee Valley Authority; this discusses alternative energy sources.

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Mrs. David Deutsch

-2-

Finally, you asked why not spend the money used for nuclear technology on efficient use of coal, wind, and solar energy. The Second National Energy Plan transmitted by the President to the Congress on May 7, 1979, included the following statement: "If nuclear power were not available, coal would have to supply most of the mid and long-term electrical demand until new sources such as solar were developed. This would cause serious environmental, occupational, safety, and social problems as well as the possibility of a significant rise in coal prices."

The enclosed statement of December 7, 1979, by the President on the Kemeny Commission Report on Three Mile Island said: "Every domestic energy source, including nuclear power, is critical if we are to be free as a country from our present over-dependence on unstable and uncertain sources of high priced foreign oil." The President emphasized the need to improve the safety of nuclear power.

An Action Plan has been developed to provide a comprehensive and integrated basis for the actions judged necessary by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to correct or improve the regulation and operation of nuclear facilities as a result of the experience from the Three Mile Island accident and the official studies and investigations of the accident. Every effort is being made to protect the public health and safety at all nuclear power plants that are currently in operation or that may start operating in the future.

Sincerely,

Harold R. Denton, Director
Office of Nuclear Reactor
Regulation

Enclosures:
As stated

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Docket Files 50-320/50-237/STN 50-566/STN 50-567
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