

JUN 09 1981

Docket Nos.: 50-400/401/402/403

Mr. Christopher John Adams, Secretary
The Orange County Democratic Party
Box 142
Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27514

Dear Mr. Adams:

By letter, dated May 8, 1981, you sent to the Office of the Chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission a resolution passed by the Orange County Democratic Party in opposition to nuclear power and to the construction of the Shearon Harris Nuclear Power Plant. We appreciate the concerns raised in the resolution and would like to provide the following comments relating to them.

The resolution states that a nuclear power plant threatens the public health and safety. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), in its review of applications for licenses to construct and operate nuclear power plants, is required to consider, among other things, those measures necessary for the protection of the public's health and safety. To carry out this responsibility, the NRC staff conducts detailed reviews of each nuclear power plant application in a two stage licensing process. The first stage is completed prior to the granting of a construction permit and the second stage is completed prior to authorizing an operating license.

In the case of the Shearon Harris Plant, such a detailed review was performed and completed prior to granting the construction permits for the plant. The plant is currently under construction and the Carolina Power & Light Company (applicant) has submitted an application for operating licenses. The NRC staff will perform the second stage of its detailed review prior to authorizing operating licenses for the plant. This process will start after a determination has been made that the application is sufficiently complete to initiate the detailed review.

The resolution states that a nuclear power plant produces radioactive waste materials for which no safe disposal exists. Operation of a nuclear power plant does result in radioactive materials which require safe storage or disposal. These can be categorized into high-level (e.g., spent fuel) and low-level (e.g., protective clothing and cleaning rags) radioactive materials. Storage facilities for low-level wastes currently do exist and include those located at Beatty, Nevada and Barnwell, South Carolina.

For high-level wastes, the Department of Energy has the responsibility for providing facilities for the storage and/or disposal of this material. Based on current plans, a permanent offsite storage facility for spent fuel will not be available prior to 1990. In order to accommodate the number of spent fuel elements that will accumulate until a permanent offsite storage facility is available, various utilities are increasing the capacity of their onsite spent fuel storage facilities. However, any expansion of spent fuel storage capacity must be reviewed and approved by the

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Christopher John Adams

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The applicant for the Shearon Harris Plant is planning on expanding the capacity of the onsite spent fuel storage facilities for the plant and has described the design of the expanded facilities in its application for operating licenses. The NRC staff will review this design as part of its detailed review of the application.

In the resolution, reference is made to alternative sources of energy in place of nuclear power. The resolution also states that a nuclear plant poses an unnecessary burden on the customers of a utility. This is a matter that was evaluated during our review of the Shearon Harris Plant prior to authorizing construction. At that time, the NRC staff determined that when the total costs, including the operating costs as well as the construction costs, of a plant at Shearon Harris are considered, the total costs of a nuclear plant would be lower than for other alternatives. This evaluation was included in the staff's Final Environmental Statement and was presented to the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board during the hearing process. Following the hearing, the Board issued a decision in which it concluded that the total costs of a nuclear plant would be lower than for other alternatives. This decision was later affirmed by the Atomic Safety and Licensing Appeal Board.

I am pleased to have had this opportunity to respond to your letter.

Sincerely,

Darrell G. Eisenhut, Director
Division of Licensing
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

SEE PREVIOUS CONCURRENCE.

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Christopher John Adams

- 2 -

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Division of Licensing
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

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TO: Ahearne		COMPL DEADLINE		DATE OF DOCUMENT 5/8/81
DESCRIPTION <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LETTER <input type="checkbox"/> MEMO <input type="checkbox"/> REPORT <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER		ACKNOWLEDGMENT		PREPARE FOR SIGNATURE OF:
Encl. Resolution dtd 4/25/81 opposing nuclear power		INTERIM REPLY		<input type="checkbox"/> CHAIRMAN
CLASSIFIED DATA		FINAL REPLY	<i>S/ Purple</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
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ASSIGNED TO:		SECY-81-0688		
DATE		CLASSIFICATION		
Denton, NRR f/ 5/19/81		CATEGORY		
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(11-75)

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To: Ahearne Date 5/8/81

Subject: resolution opposing nuclear power

- Prepare reply for signature of:
- Chairman
 - Commissioner _____
 - EDO, GC, CL, SOL, PA, SECY, IA, PE
 - Signature block omitted
 - _____
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For direct reply*

For appropriate action

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