

ROBERT T. MATSUI
3RD DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Congress of the United States
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Washington, D.C. 20515

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April 24, 1979

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Mr. Joseph M. Hendrie
Chairman
Nuclear Regulatory Commission
1717 H Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20555

Dear Mr. Hendrie:

In view of recommendations made yesterday by members of the Office of Reactor Regulation and the absence of satisfactory answers to questions I have previously raised on this issue, I have concluded, after carefully considering all sides of this issue, that Rancho Seco must be temporarily shut down until the present uncertainties are clarified.

It is clear that nuclear facilities designed by Babcock & Wilcox have an unusual number of technical inadequacies. Foremost among these is the system's inordinate sensitivity to feedwater transients. This, coupled with an extremely complex control system that is not always capable of dealing with these complications, leads me to question the soundness of the system's overall ability to deal with transients.

Following the Three Mile Island accident, the NRC issued a series of complex directives to B&W plant operators. These directives demand extensive retraining and orientation to the intricacies of the B&W system. In order to fully comprehend the scope and nature of these directives, the plant operators will need additional time. Therefore, until they and NRC officials are properly equipped to handle system complications, plants of this design should not be allowed to function.

The health and safety of the people living in the area of the Rancho Seco plant is paramount. I therefore urge you to temporarily shut down the plant so that existing problems

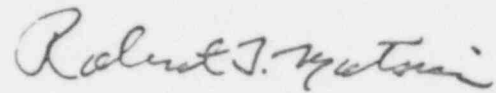
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may be corrected, enabling Rancho Seco to quickly resume safe and normal operation.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert T. Matsui".

ROBERT T. MATSUI
Member of Congress

RTM/co

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