



OFFICE OF THE  
COMMISSIONER

March 16, 1979

The Honorable John Glenn, Chairman  
Subcommittee on Energy, Nuclear  
Proliferation and Federal Services  
Committee on Governmental Affairs  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

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Dear Senator Glenn:

I am writing in order to provide my separate answer to one of the questions you posed in your letter of February 6, 1979, in which you requested the Commission's views on certain aspects of nuclear waste management.

Question 1. Accordingly, I would like to be advised as to the Commission's state of confidence at the present time that nuclear waste materials will be safely cared for, the basis for this confidence, and any steps the Commission intends to take in its licensing process to reflect its present thinking on this matter.

Answer

I would hold to the view expressed by the Commission in June, 1977, that it had "reasonable confidence that the wastes can and will in due course be disposed of safely," and that that was an essential component of the Commission's reactor licensing decisions. Since the Commission made that statement the government's efforts in waste management have expanded considerably, involving a great many more persons expert in a number of scientific disciplines than was the case before and have attracted the direct attention of the President. It has to be added that one of the effects of the expansion of the government's technical effort in this area has been to raise questions about the validity of the technical bases of the earlier Commission judgement, but I take this to be a necessary concomitant of addressing the underlying scientific and technical questions with the seriousness they require.

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More recently the Commission committed itself "to reassessing its basis for confidence as new data are developed and progress is made in the Federal program" and promised to keep Congress and the President informed of any changes that significantly affect its confidence that waste can be disposed of safely. 1/

What this means to me is that the Commission is going to play an active role in urging the government to develop and carry out needed waste disposal programs. And if it senses lack of progress it is going to carry that message to the highest levels of government.

Sincerely,

*Victor Gilinsky*  
Victor Gilinsky  
Commissioner

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1/ Letter to Secretary Schlesinger, Department of Energy, from Chairman Hendrie, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, dated December 27, 1978.

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