



CHAIRMAN

UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20555

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Car

June 21, 1979

Mrs. George E. Noyes
381 Elderlane
Winnetka, IL 60093

Dear Mrs. Noyes:

The answer to your question is that we continue to license nuclear plants and permit their operation because we have reasonable confidence that the wastes can and will be disposed of permanently in a safe manner.

There can be no argument that we have not moved forward in the development of nuclear energy as we should have to complete the engineering and construction of at least one prototype waste disposal facility. In fact, work in this area was greatly reduced in the late 1960's and early 70's, to make funds available for other projects. That was a mistake which has been reversed in the last few years with greatly increased funding levels for waste disposal facility development, but the delays caused by those years of near-neglect continue to plague us.

Nevertheless, there has been a great deal of research and development work done on waste disposal, particularly for deep geologic disposal. There are some problems and uncertainties remaining to be investigated, but I would not characterize those as posing any fundamental obstacles. In fact, I know of no authoritative work showing that safe permanent disposal can not be accomplished. Numerous studies report that it can be done--I suggest the American Physical Society fuel cycle study and the Ford/ MITRE study for two. It is my belief that the technology of waste disposal is in part in hand and that the balance of the technology development will be accomplished in the coming years.

What is not in hand is the necessary political structure to allow the technology to progress in the area of pilot plant or demonstration facilities in an optimum manner. However, it is inconceivable to me that we, as a nation, lack the will to get on with the solution to this problem. I will look to you and to other concerned citizens to keep making it clear to our political leaders that you, and all of us, want this work to go forward--carefully and thoroughly and prudently, to be sure--but also aggressively and with firm resolve.

Sincerely,

Joseph M. Hendrie

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