

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION ON THE ACCIDENT AT THREE MILE ISLAND

PRESS CONFERENCE

THURSDAY,
JULY 19, 1979

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17 THURSDAY,
18 JULY 19, 1979

19 Hall of Nations
20 Edmund Walsh Building
21 Georgetown University
22 36th Street, N.W.
23 Washington, D.C.
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P R O C E E D I N G S

3:18 P. M.

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CHAIRMAN KEMENY: We did our best to follow through the "falling through the cracks" at the end of it, which apparently happened in front of some cold drink machines.

(Laughter.)

I don't mean to be too critical on that. I am afraid, I must confess, I have thought how many times one of my colleagues caught me on campus, walking across, and asked me an important decision.

Secondly, you know, we have tried probing the quality of the operator training, and I will be glad to answer any of your questions.

QUESTION: Dr. Kemeny, there seems to be -- I'm struck, at least, by a lack of presence of the NRC in the aftermath of the Davis-Besse. I know that the Commission has grilled these B&W witnesses pretty sternly about their role in calling these oversights or inappropriate actions that they have expressed to other customers.

Where, in your mind, does the role of the vendor in that regard end and the role of the NRC as a regulator begin?

CHAIRMAN KEMENY: Let me first give you a fact. We have started our deposition process within NRC. We certainly expect that one of the August hearings will, unless the Commission rules otherwise -- I mean, certainly a hearing, and probably one of the August hearings, will be devoted to the

Bowers Reporting Company

1 NRC.

2 I think you are raising a quite fundamental issue.
3 I am, at the moment, with the knowledge I have so far: I am
4 not sure anyone is clear as to where that boundary lies. So,
5 therefore, personally, what I am certainly interested in prob-
6 ing is not so much where the boundary should be as to whether
7 it is clearly understood where the boundary is, which seems to
8 me a quite fundamental issue.

9 QUESTION: There seems to be also a discrepancy in
10 the training here about how much the B&W people were respon-
11 sible and what their company wanted.

12 CHAIRMAN KEMENY: Yes, that was clearly going through
13 my mind, too, and apparently different companies divide this
14 task up differently. Some companies, I have heard, have
15 strong in-house training programs; some rely heavily on the
16 vendor, and in this case, you have a mixture of the two of
17 them.

18 Again, it is not very clear. I must confess, at
19 this stage I do not quite understand the operator licensing
20 process because of this mixture of information that they have
21 to rely on in order to do that, and certainly that is one of
22 our charges from the President that we are to check the NRC's
23 licensing process and their operator supervision process.
24 At the moment, I must say I am confused.

25 QUESTION: Then it would not seem unusual, then,

1 that they did not simulate the Davis-Besse accident because
2 they weren't asked to. If B&W is asked to do things and paid
3 to do it by, let's say, Met. Ed., that is when they do the
4 simulation, and since Met. Ed. didn't realize there was a
5 real problem because of a similar problem at Davis-Besse, they
6 would have never asked for a simulation.

7 CHAIRMAN KEMENY: I think that may very well be
8 accurate.

9 QUESTION: It just seems unusual that they would
10 not have -- wouldn't you find that unusual that 17 months
11 afterward they had not simulated that?

12 CHAIRMAN KEMENY: Yes. Well, of course, to me an
13 even more interesting question is whether NRC had run any simu-
14 lations on that particular accident.

15 QUESTION: Both Mr. Karrasch and Mr. Hallman played
16 roles in the "slipping through the cracks" that was discussed
17 yesterday. Mr. Hallman took responsibility for that, or said
18 he did. Do you think that that is where the responsibility
19 lies?

20 CHAIRMAN KEMENY: I think the responsibility -- it
21 finally comes down to the famous conversation we heard about
22 that occurred earlier this year, where apparently there was a
23 lack of understanding between the two individuals, where, as
24 I heard it, Mr. Karrasch thought he had clearly indicated that
25 yes, the Dunn memo was essentially correct and not to worry

1 about the two concerns that had been raised, and therefore
2 assumed that that information would go out to customers.
3 That is not what Dr. Hallman heard.

4 QUESTION: That was the hallway conversation that
5 was never reduced to writing?

6 CHAIRMAN KEMENY: That is the hallway conversation.
7 And Dr. Hallman did make statements, of course -- they both
8 made statements that they realized that that was a procedure
9 that should not have happened, that if they had fully realized
10 the importance of it, they would have used much more formal
11 procedures.

12 QUESTION: But the question was, do you agree with
13 Dr. Hallman's statement that he felt that he was the person
14 who was responsible?

15 CHAIRMAN KEMENY: Yes, I believe it was certainly
16 his responsibility to get out the information to the customers
17 once he had a clear signal on that.

18 QUESTION: Do you intend to recall some people from
19 the utility, because the questioning was not nearly as sharp
20 when they appeared and didn't focus on details as much, and
21 obviously, it seems there might be greater information to be
22 found. Do you expect them to come back?

23 CHAIRMAN KEMENY: The Commission has not made a
24 decision on that yet, but I should tell you that we have
25 started an additional round of taking depositions under oath

1 from the utility in the light of what we have learned in the
2 interim, a quite extensive round of taking of depositions from
3 the utility, and I assume it depends on what we find on that
4 whether we will or will not recall some witnesses.

5 QUESTION: What is your overall analysis of training
6 of operators at this point, having heard what you have heard?
7 What do you think about it?

8 CHAIRMAN KEMENY: "I'm confused" is, I believe, the
9 best description of it. I mean, remember, I have been an
10 educator all my life, and I am having a little trouble getting
11 to grips with this kind of educational process.

12 QUESTION: Did you find that the last witness was
13 sort of at odds with the people before him in saying that --
14 the first ones were saying that it is really operator error
15 in most of these things, in five out of six you outlined, and
16 the guy in charge of training said, well, that's the best we
17 can do; we couldn't train anybody any better. We were at the
18 limit at that point.

19 CHAIRMAN KEMENY: I don't think there is a contra-
20 diction there. It presents -- I think it presents a genuine
21 dilemma, doesn't it? But I don't think they contradicted each
22 other on the facts. I was listening for that fairly carefully.
23 It creates a dilemma as to what the right remedy for the prob-
24 lem is, since, as you correctly point out, one group described
25 a problem here, and the person directly in charge of training,

1 you know, as you said, did the best -- they said they will try
2 better in the future.

3 QUESTION: You didn't directly get into it today,
4 but maybe some of your staff people have by now, and you are
5 an expert in the field; I am going to ask you about it. How
6 difficult is it to program one of these simulators for just a
7 huge number of these possible sequences? Have they told you
8 all whether or not it is possible to get a record of most
9 transients that occur in the country and just keep programming
10 these things in and just keep running them through the opera-
11 t ors?

12 CHAIRMAN KEMENY: Let's see. I believe the problem
13 of programming them is not that dif ficult. It may be one
14 large job, but I would imagine, and I haven't done the analysis
15 myself, the cost of it would be small compared to the cost of
16 a single nuclear plant. So I think that is not the difficulty.

17 Putting the operators through the training is quite
18 a different thing, because in order to serve for operator
19 training, the simulators must operate in what they call real
20 time, that something that happens in an hour in the real plant
21 must take an hour within the control room. The question is,
22 if it takes you an hour to take an operator through one parti-
23 c ular sequence, and you've got a two-week training program
24 which has to do all kinds of things, how many of them can you
25 put any particular operator through?

1 QUESTION: You can't compare them, in other words.

2 CHAIRMAN KEMENY: Well, you can compare for
3 theoretical analysis, and that is one of the things we are
4 looking into as to why simulators are not used more, you know,
5 for analysis. If you are doing analysis, you run the simula-
6 tor as fast as it can be run. But it wouldn't help in opera-
7 tor training because you want realistic circumstances for the
8 operator. I mean, if you throw things at them that would
9 happen in the control room in 30 minutes and it happens within
10 one minute in the simulator, then you are giving the wrong
11 kind of training there.

12 So this is a dilemma we have to think about.
13 Realistically, should one require a much longer training
14 period, or realistically, how many combinations can you put
15 the operators through, and each one takes, say, of the order
16 of magnitude of an hour or two.

17 QUESTION: Dr. Kemeny, this may be a bit premature,
18 but do you see the Commission perhaps recommending some sort
19 of standardized operator training so that we don't have this
20 commercial end to it in which dollars and sense are really con-
21 sidered more than the adequacy of the program?

22 CHAIRMAN KEMENY: I don't know that -- as long --
23 I have a little trouble with "standardized," since there are
24 a number of substantially different nuclear power plants
25 around. There are two questions, really, in standardization:

1 One, are there too many different designs around? Let me
2 present the dilemma on that. It would be easy to say that one
3 should have much fewer designs around, and then it would be
4 easier to train people, to transfer them from one plant to
5 another.

6 On the other hand, if you made that recommendation,
7 would that have the effect that it would be one more disincen-
8 tive or make it that much harder to change a plant? You would
9 have to get all the utilities that have that kind of plant in
10 existence to agree to the change. So would it be one more
11 disincentive to exchanging something?

12 But at least whether, say, for one vendor there
13 should be a standardized situation, but then you run into the
14 problem, at least under present situation, as you heard, the
15 major parts of the plant are not designed by the vendor. You
16 have heard over and over again, "But that is done by the
17 architect-engineers." We are just now starting to look at the
18 architect-engineer in TMI II, which is Burns & Rowe. I don't
19 fully understand exactly where the line of division is.

20 I must say, it is the only example I have run across
21 where the company that designs the guts of the thing does not
22 design the control room that runs it, and that strikes me as
23 unusual. I believe that is not unique in this case, from what
24 I understand, so I am not saying there is something particu-
25 larly wrong here, but --

1 QUESTION: TMI has two control rooms of different
2 design. One is Gilbert and the other one is Burns & Rowe.

3 CHAIRMAN KEMENY: Yes. Since they had two differ-
4 ent architect-engineers, they came up with different designs
5 for the control room. This is why, for example, you could be
6 licensed at TMI I and not licensed at TMI II, because the
7 control room is different, and the actual simulator, as we
8 understand, only fits one of the B&W plants which has what
9 they call their standard control room in it, and one doesn't
10 know how much confusion that leads to.

11 But this seems to run -- it is a theme that runs
12 through that there are so many different actors involved in
13 certain key decisions that the opportunity, I think, for
14 things falling between the cracks, must be substantial.

15 QUESTION: What was the line of questioning about
16 Gary Miller's training related to? He was the former GPU
17 man who went for his training when he was with GPU and then
18 went to Med. Ed.

19 CHAIRMAN KEMENY: I must confess, I did not know
20 what the point of that questioning was, but I may have missed
21 something. Do you know, Stan?

22 MR. GORINSON: I think all they were trying to
23 establish is using Gary Miller as an example of what kind of
24 training the GPU personnel were being given.

25 CHAIRMAN KEMENY: Oh, I see.

1 QUESTION: So it was as an example only.

2 MR. GORINSON: Yes.

3 QUESTION: His name came up several times.

4 QUESTION: It wasn't because he, as the station
5 manager -- as I recall his earlier testimony, I think he
6 arrived at the control room sometime like an hour or two into
7 the sequence.

8 CHAIRMAN KEMENY: Yes, and he told --

9 QUESTION: And really kind of took charge.

10 MR. GORINSON: He was the emergency director.

11 CHAIRMAN KEMENY: Yes. I am sure he was picked as
12 an example because he played the major role in the early hours
13 in the sense that he took charge of the emergency.

14 QUESTION: Dr. Kemeny, can you explain one point
15 that --

16 CHAIRMAN KEMENY: I'll try!

17 QUESTION: The Portland Electric Power Company,
18 Professor Pigford was asking questions about a series of ques-
19 tions that was submitted by the power company-- I am trying
20 to understand what this was about -- to Babcock & Wilcox.
21 Now, were those questions predicting the sequence of events
22 that actually did occur at TMI II? Were they asking for what
23 should be done in the emergency procedures from B&W?

24 CHAIRMAN KEMENY: I must confess, I have not seen
25 those questions, and therefore I can't answer you.

1 MR. GORINSON: As I understand it, those were the
2 ACRS questions to the utility about the preparation --

3 CHAIRMAN KEMENY: That is, you know, the advisory
4 committee that helps NRC, as I understand, in licensing.

5 QUESTION: But the question, the point I am trying
6 to ask, is were those questions predictive of the kind of
7 sequence that happened at TMI II, and were they not fully --
8 he said they were not fully answered by B&W.

9 CHAIRMAN KEMENY: I don't know. The one that Pro-
10 fessor Pigford read out first certainly sounded as if it had
11 some relevance to TMI.

12 QUESTION: Yes.

13 CHAIRMAN KEMENY: It certainly didn't sound to me,
14 if that question was read in its entirety, as if it was pre-
15 dictive of TMI, but it deal with the question as to whether
16 operators can get confused because of pressurizer levels.

17 QUESTION: There was a question at one point asking
18 whether or not the series of events, sequence of events, at
19 Davis-Besse had been simulated, and the answer Mr. Elliott
20 gave was, if I had instructed a student to go through that,
21 he would say it was absurd in the simulator. He wouldn't
22 comment beyond that. I was just wondering if you had any
23 interpretation of that remark, what he meant by it?

24 CHAIRMAN KEMENY: Well, let's see. I suspect what
25 he meant by it is that things should not be allowed to get to

1 that point, but I can give you one relevant piece of informa-
2 tion, not about Davis-Besse but about TMI II. We have had
3 members of our staff go down and use the simulator, and as you
4 heard, modifications were made in the simulator.

5 The way the simulator was before March 28 of this
6 year, it could only simulate the first few minutes of the TMI
7 II accident. Since that time, modifications have been made.
8 Our staff has gone through it, and it now correctly simulates,
9 say, the first 100 minutes. We stopped at that point because
10 that was the crucial point, in a way.

11 So, therefore, actually, it is not clear whether it
12 could happen, Davis-Besse could happen, simulated in its en-
13 tirety, the way the simulators were designed. You remember,
14 there was a description by Mr. Elliott about some of the short-
15 comings, and apparently there were others where the simulator
16 was built to simulate reasonably normal occurrences, and
17 therefore did not handle -- I mean sort of stopped, or you ran
18 out of the knowledge of the simulator when a certain event
19 happened.

20 QUESTION: Do you recall -- I don't have my sequence
21 with me -- for how long HPI was shut down?

22 CHAIRMAN KEMENY: I believe it was shut down for
23 somewhere between 2 and 2½ hours.

24 QUESTION: Two hours and 20 minutes.

25 QUESTION: Yes.

1 CHAIRMAN KEMENY: I know it is between 2 and 2½
2 hours, which is a much longer period than at Davis-Besse.

3 QUESTION: Do you have any idea whether those Pebble
4 Springs questions that the ACRS was working with predated
5 March 28 or followed after that as far as their consideration?

6 CHAIRMAN KEMENY: Stan, do you know that?

7 MR. GORINSON: I'm not sure of that.

8 QUESTION: When do you expect to begin writing your
9 report?

10 CHAIRMAN KEMENY: We really haven't faced the issue
11 yet, but we are working back from the October 25 deadline,
12 and certainly we have to start thinking about it in early
13 September; that's clear. We have not yet agreed on a procedure
14 on how we are going to do it.

15 See, the difficulty is we are still finding a multi-
16 plicity of issues, and there are major areas within our charge
17 that are now being -- I mean, July and August will be our
18 most intensive investigative periods, and in any way, we have
19 to get some feeling of the magnitude of what we find before we
20 sit down to start writing a report.

21 QUESTION: Is there any thought of --

22 CHAIRMAN KEMENY: Sorry, I should clarify that in
23 the following way: The report, of course, means two different
24 things. Each staff task that is investigating an area is
25 formulating clear plans on how their report -- that is, their

1 technical report which is, a matter of fact, the report to
2 the Commission -- will occur. What I am saying is the Commis-
3 sion itself has not yet faced the issue of how we are going
4 to pull that all together and based on the findings and
5 recommendations.

6 QUESTION: Is there any thought that some sort of
7 an extension might be necessary?

8 CHAIRMAN KEMENY: I hope not.

9 (Laughter.)

10 (Whereupon, at 3:37 p. m., the press conference
11 was concluded.)