



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

July 6, 1979

Comm
Corr

Mr. Kenneth Jernigan, President
National Federation of the Blind, Inc.
1800 Johnson Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21230

Dear Mr. Jernigan:

I have been receiving a number of letters from blind persons enclosing the resolution of the National Federation of the Blind demanding an apology for my unfortunate reference to the blind made during a Commission meeting on the accident at Three Mile Island.

While I have been responding to these letters individually and on May 10, 1979 issued the enclosed press release offering a public apology, I did want to correspond directly with you to express my personal embarrassment at the thoughtlessness of my remark and to ask that you convey my apologies to your membership.

The remark, as you know, was made at a closed meeting of the Commission during which we were trying with considerable difficulty to obtain sufficient information on which to base a recommendation to the Governor of Pennsylvania as to whether or not a general evacuation of the surrounding area should be ordered. In a moment of intense frustration I characterized the position in which Governor Thornburgh and I found ourselves as being "like a couple of blind men staggering around making decisions."

The reference, of course, was to our lack of information. Nonetheless, the words were ill-chosen and capable of misinterpretation. It certainly was not my intention to disparage in any way the capabilities or achievements of the many Americans who are blind. I sincerely regret the impact of my remark and hope you will transmit to those who I might have offended my profoundest apologies and my commitment to be more cognizant of the abilities and contributions of the blind in the future.

Sincerely,


Joseph M. Hendrie

Enclosure:
As stated

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OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555

No. 79-84
Contact: Joseph J. Fouchard
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
(Mailed - May 10, 1979)

STATEMENT BY NRC CHAIRMAN JOSEPH M. HENDRIE

Chairman Joseph M. Hendrie of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission today issued the following statement concerning a comment he made during Commission discussions of the Three Mile Island accident on March 30:

"I have received a number of communications from persons who were troubled, and justifiably so, about a comment I made during the tense moments of Commission discussion of the Three Mile Island accident. In describing our difficult problem of obtaining accurate information, I said 'It's like a couple of blind men staggering around making decisions.'

"This was an unfortunate reference to blind persons. It was spoken at a time of intense frustration when we were having difficulty in getting clear and adequate information to make reasonable decisions on the situation at Three Mile Island. I am sincerely sorry for the statement. I certainly intended no disparagement of anyone with a sight impairment."

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