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NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

IN THE MATTER OF:

POOR ORIGINAL

(This transcript was prepared from a tape recording.)

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129

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NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

April 1, 1979

(This transcript prepared from an open mike tape.)

4/1/79
JWB Oper.
Mike

1 COMMISSIONER AHEARNE: Peter, as long as we get the question mark
2 in --

3 COMMISSIONER BRADFORD: Well, I may get (Inaudible)

4 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: My assumption was -- you
5 may have to rewrite the question. At one point, we were going
6 to take the thing off.

7 COMMISSIONER AHEARNE: Well, you and Vic --

8 COMMISSIONER AHEARNE: Well, never mind. I
9 don't think that's important.

10 The question is, given what we --

11 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: Remember, what we changed
12 was on the left-hand side.

13 COMMISSIONER BRADFORD: Yes.

14 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: Originally, this had to d. --
15 let's see. I've got one of the original copies here --

16 COMMISSIONER BRADFORD: Yes, the word is "explosive," instead of
17 "probable."

18 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: "In the explosive range."

19 COMMISSIONER BRADFORD: Then it turned out that "probable" was just
20 as bad.

21 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: Well, but the reason for my
22 assuming that the question mark applied to the whole thing was
23 that in this other 17 -- or this text, a hydrogen explosion,
24 it said: "Rough analysis indicates that the pressure vessel
25 would not rupture." If the core is crushed, it could do this,

1 but compression would unlike -- it could lead to a core
2 meltdown sequence, but it had already said a core melt would
3 not rupture the containment.

4 COMMISSIONER BRADFORD: But I thought it was
5 also pretty clear, at least from (inaudible), he said that if
6 you knew there was going to be a hydrogen explosion, that
7 you would do a precautionary evacuation one would hope.

8 COMMISSIONER AHEARNE: I think, to try to get back,
9 I believe the question we have to try to address is whether
10 or not we think we have to say that we ought to order a
11 precautionary evacuation.

12 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: Based on what I hear from
13 these gentlemen, the answer, I think, in my own view, is just
14 "no"; that in fact each time that we get a pessimistic set of
15 data and parameters, it's immediately matched by something
16 which says, "no," that the situation is really not that way;
17 it's something else.

18 And it seems to me that so long -- all I know is
19 what we're hearing and what -- the data that's coming in from
20 all over the country, as it's being collected, it needs
21 assimilation and analysis to find out just what the various
22 calculations really mean.

23 Unless -- the option obviously is, you say: Well,
24 let's assume the worst case. And that could mean (a) that
25 all the information that we have is on the worst case side;

1 (b) that our assumptions as to the meaning of that data and
2 the results -- the consequences what would flow from it are
3 inevitable and on the worst-case side, and in that case one
4 would want to go through that postulate, once -- certainly at
5 the rate we ought to be seriously thinking about the precau-
6 tionary evacuation.

7 COMMISSIONER AHEARNE: I guess my worry is that we're now at
8 getting out the 4:00 o'clock. We've got the dusk falling
9 there, and if you're worried you can make the recommendation
10 of say, clearing out to some distance, and it really should be
11 done and acknowledged, rather than waiting until 7:00 o'clock.

12 COMMISSIONER BRADFORD: You know, that's -- my own feeling is --
13 well, I think I've --

14 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: Let me add, I understand the
15 merit of that argument.

16 One other thing. Didn't Joe say that they were
17 going to have a big meeting, at what time?

18 5:00 o'clock.

19 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: He said 5:00 o'clock.

20 COMMISSIONER BRADFORD: (Inaudible).

21 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: He is, and the big utility
22 company, B&W, and all the people -- Westinghouse, all the
23 people that are up there, so there will be a general conclave
24 of all the experts that are working on the problem, to review
25 exactly where they stand, what they see. I would think that --

1 I would be reluctant to reach any conclusion at this juncture
2 without knowing what Joe's feeling is as a result of that
3 meeting.

4 All right, when you say -- I didn't catch
5 who --

6 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: "GPU," General Public
7 Utility.

8
9 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: My understanding about what
10 the FBAA fellow said was that we can assume that at least
11 20 percent of the people are already gone from even a 5-mile
12 radius, and that anybody within sight of the plant has gone.

13 So what are we talking about?

14 COMMISSIONER AHEARNE: Well, if they're gone (inaudible)

15 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: I realize that, except --
16 except in other respects.

17 COMMISSIONER AHEARNE: Yes, but (inaudible).

18 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: Well, I don't know.

19 Peter, what do you think?

20 COMMISSIONER BRADFORD: Well, I think before the
21 meeting, that meeting, it would be well for Joe just to know
22 our judgment sitting back here.

23 For my own part, I would -- I would be more
24 comfortable either -- well, my preference would be to evacuate
25 at least a 20 (?) mile area. I would at least lay out very

1 clearly for Governor Thornburgh as much as one can reasonably
2 be extrapolated out of (inaudible) the technical situation,
3 and even to --

4 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: Don't forget that Bob
5 Budnitz's technical situation is affected by two
6 procedures --

7 COMMISSIONER BRADFORD: I understand that. But
8 what that comes down to, though, is a matter of allocating
9 the substantial degree of uncertainty assumption. And again,
10 Thornburgh needs to understand --

11 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: I understand that.

12 COMMISSIONER BRADFORD: -- what the range of
13 uncertainties are.

14 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: That's right. Yes.

15 COMMISSIONER AHEARNE: Because our thing, what Bob is trying to
16 put down -- and we really should -- here's what might happen.
17 There are uncertainties that mitigate that, but the closer in
18 you get to the plant, the more you want to say -- you want to
19 put much heavier weight on the bad --

20 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: On the bad side. Sure, I
21 understand that.

22 COMMISSIONER AHEARNE: And I guess at this stage I would come down
23 on -- (inaudible).

24 COMMISSIONER BRADFORD: There are -- you can be
25 pretty cautious with the answers. You can be -- within any

1018 099

135

1 given radius, you can be evacuating -- you can be telling
2 people that they do not have to evacuate; or you could be
3 saying, "Make up your own mind, but here is our best statement
4 of the situation."

5 I don't think that there's been -- and all the
6 clear-statements certainly of the situation, really of the
7 overall uncertainties involved (inaudible) situation. But I
8 know the things they're coming out with, and I know (inaudible).

9 COMMISSIONER AHEARNE: (Inaudible) changing --

10 COMMISSIONER BRADFORD: Yeah, but -- what I meant
11 by a "clear statement" was a clear statement of the -- what
12 would happen, a clear statement of the uncertainties involved
13 and what would be the consequences; but with certainty what
14 we think will happen, or the technical people think, is still
15 not -- that it doesn't result in significant public exposure.

16 But to be absolutely clear about the level of
17 uncertainty involved here in our calculation, and if you say
18 the fact that this again gets to the problem of figures back
19 and forth (inaudible).

20 But if you take all the worst figures out of there,
21 you have a situation in which the only thing that stands
22 between something really difficult to handle happening before,
23 and the present situation, is that no one -- no one as yet
24 has been able to come up with an ignition mechanism.

25 And I guess I'd be more comfortable if a lot of the

1018 100

136

1 people who have been working for a lot of years on this
2 question, instead of some very tired people who have been on
3 it for 24 hours.

4 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: If I -- well, a lot -- you
5 know, actually an awful lot of people are working on the
6 problem, not just these, all over the country --

7 COMMISSIONER BRADFORD: No, and it's clear that
8 none of them are even saying we see something that might set
9 off the spark, so that's the important element. But I don't
10 think any of them are saying, furthermore, we're 100 percent
11 certain that --

12 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: Only the superheating
13 problem of a spontaneous ignition. That is, a spontaneous
14 ignition at a level which is far beyond anything (inaudible).

15 COMMISSIONER BRADFORD: I gather there are some
16 people who feel that any kind of pressure drop that exposed
17 the fuel rods could get some combustion.

18 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: "Might"?

19 COMMISSIONER AHEARNE: It might, but it would --

20 COMMISSIONER BRADFORD: At least within (inaudible).

21 COMMISSIONER AHEARNE: Yes.

22 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: Well, my own view is that
23 I would certainly, on my own part, express concern, take
24 account of the fact that there are a lot of uncertainties,
25 and therefore one has to take account of -- you can exercise

1 cautionary notes, all right, but there will be signals,
2 and I would say that, for my own part, I would be a lot more
3 comfortable in reaching a recommendation after I heard the
4 results of the meeting to which Joe is going with the people
5 who are most directly involved with the project.

6 - COMMISSIONER AHEARNE: I guess I would feel
7 more comfortable if we let Joe have our feelings before he
8 went to that meeting.

9 COMMISSIONER BRADFORD: Yes. It isn't as though we
10 had to walk out of here and tell them in the papers if Joe
11 gets -- if Joe gets readings that make him feel that that's
12 an optimum situation, why --

13 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: Well, I don't know whether
14 what we're saying is different, except -- except you're saying
15 you would -- you would, right now, if they weren't having the
16 meeting, you would evacuate.

17 COMMISSIONER AHEARNE(?): No. What I'm saying
18 right now: If they weren't having the meeting, I would call
19 Joe and say, "My judgment is that you ought to advise the
20 Governor to go through this advisory you previously gave
21 pregnant women and children within 5 miles, and I would advise
22 him to do that for everybody out to 3(?) miles."

23 COMMISSIONER BRADFORD: Well, I guess that's the
24 right way to put it. If somebody lives within the 2 miles
25 (inaudible), and he would rather stay there and do whatever

1018 102

138

1 he has to do tonight, hell, I guess I should go in and tell
2 him and I think the Army ought to come in and take him away.

3 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: Well, they won't do that
4 anyway.

5 COMMISSIONER BRADFORD: Right, but the advisory is
6 the right way to put it.

7 COMMISSIONER AHEARNE(?): Well, would the presence
8 of -- I would then relay this advice to Joe (inaudible)

9 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: Well, my own -- you know,
10 okay, we have a slightly different nuance of views. I would
11 certainly express my concern, mitigated only by -- I'm not
12 sure that's the right word -- only by the obvious differences
13 in data which keep coming along, and recognizing the serious-
14 ness of an advice to either evacuate or even give an advisory
15 of that kind, on the one hand.

16 And on the other hand, my concern for what will
17 come out of this meeting, and if at the end of that meeting
18 nothing came out of such merit as to substantial mitigation
19 my existing level of concern, then I think I would have to say
20 in my own judgment, that I think there ought to be some kind
21 of an advisory or precautionary (inaudible).

22 It's a slight nuance. I'm not suggesting to have to
23 go into the meeting, you should know, that I personally feel you
24 ought to do this. But now maybe if you would come back, you
25 would feel differently and we can look at it then.

1 COMMISSIONER AHEARNE: Okay, I guess what you're saying --

2 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: I don't --

3 COMMISSIONER AHEARNE: Okay, can I -- is it correct that you're
4 saying that at this point, if there is no new or positive
5 information available after that meeting, that you would go
6 along with the finding?

7 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: I think so.

8 (Inaudible background discussion.)

9 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: Yeah, which is a little
10 different than saying to him: Before you go into the meeting,
11 you ought to know that, you know, we think you ought to do
12 this. Now maybe something will change our mind, but --

13 COMMISSIONER BRADFORD: Yeah, the only thing --

14 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: That's leaving my mind open
15 at this moment, but if --

16 COMMISSIONER BRADFORD: Yeah, I lean a little more
17 toward doing it sooner, for the reasons John has already
18 pointed out.

19 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: I understand that.

20 COMMISSIONER BRADFORD: But --

21 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: Let me add, we have -- we
22 will have to face that question each day, I think.

23 COMMISSIONER AHEARNE: I think the predilection
24 is, as data begins coming in during the day, we keep pushing
25 off --

1 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: Certainly. Particularly
2 when the issue is this kind of issue. You see, where it is
3 not an event, but rather a forecast of possibilities and an
4 assessment.

5 COMMISSIONER BRADFORD: And there is a paradox in
6 this, -in that when -- I think when the uncertainties were a
7 good deal broader and they seemed a good deal worse a couple
8 of days ago, the advisory was stated to go into effect on
9 pregnant women and children --

10 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: When in fact at that time
11 there actually were releases taking place.

12 COMMISSIONER BRADFORD: Yeah. I think -- I mean,
13 the way I think about it in my own mind is that there is sort
14 of a line which the advisory seems to be a good idea, and as
15 I now understand the situation, we've always been below that
16 line. We may be closer to it now, but we're still below it,
17 and (inaudible) right thing to do.

18 COMMISSIONER AHEARNE(?): I think we out to adjourn
19 now.

20 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: Will we wait for Victor to
21 get his view?

22 COMMISSIONER BRADFORD: Vic, as he went out, said
23 something to the effect that he was -- it was something out to
24 five miles. I don't know what -- that he would at least give
25 the advisory; I don't know whether he said evacuation.

1 COMMISSIONER BRADFORD: Presumably he could be reached
4:10 p.m.2 (inaudible.) (Pause.)

3 (Trying to reach Commissioner Gilinsky by phone). It
4 Peter Bradford. Can you try Commissioner Gilinsky?

5 What listing do you show for him there?

6 His downtown office.

7 He's somewhere in the White House.

8 Okay.

9 COMMISSIONER AHEARNE: Did you call --

10 (Inaudible background discussion.)

11 COMMISSIONER AHEARNE: I think Joe Hendrie's office
12 would have the number.

13 (Pause.)

14 COMMISSIONER BRADFORD: Hello, Rose. Could you
15 look on my card file for Jessica Matthews phone number.

16 (Pause.)

17 Okay, thanks very much.

18 (Pause.)

19 (Inaudible background discussion.)

20 COMMISSIONER BRADFORD: Hello, Kathy. Peter
21 Bradford. Do you know where Victor is? (Inaudible.)

22 Okay, thank you very much.

23 COMMISSIONER AHEARNE: We could call the White House
24 operator.

25 COMMISSIONER BRADFORD: Well, I suppose -- I think
what she would do, if I

1 said I thought he was with Dr. Matthews, is call Jessica.

2 Their tracking system is more sophisticated than
3 ours.

4 Should Jessica have let the White House operator
5 know where she is?

6 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: Not necessarily.

7 I'll tell you what. Call the operator. Find
8 out --

9 COMMISSIONER BRADFORD: Ask for Charlie.

10 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: Ask Charlie, and then see if
11 the car He may be in his office (inaudible).

12 (Pause.)

13 (Inaudible background discussion.)

14 COMMISSIONER BRADFORD: Charlie's going to
15 (inaudible). They found the driver without finding Victor,
16 but he's going to see.

17 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: They found the driver?
18 He doesn't know where Victor is?

19 COMMISSIONER BRADFORD: Well, no, he left Victor
20 at the front gate.

21 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: Well, in that case, call
22 the White House National Situation Room and see if he's down
23 there. I thought he was going to Jessica's office.

24 COMMISSIONER BRADFORD: (Inaudible, making the
25 phone call.)

1 COMMISSIONER BRADFORD: Mainly, it's going down.

2 (Laughter)

3 (Inaudible background discussion.)

4 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: All the communications are
5 on the other side of the building.

6 VOICE: She's got me on hold.

7 COMMISSIONER BRADFORD: Okay.

8 Hello, is Commissioner Gilinsky there?

9 Yes.

10 MR. GOSSICK: Chairman's on the line. He'd like to
11 talk to you. I don't know -- he's on the direct line. I can't
12 transfer it up here.

13 COMMISSIONER BRADFORD: I will advise you that
14 Victor is wanted here.

15 COMMISSIONER KENNEDY: That's not particularly
16 likely.

17 COMMISSIONER BRADFORD: What? Oh, I'm sorry.

18 (The tape recording ends at this point.)

4:17 p.m.

19 (Commissioners Kennedy and Ahearne go to another
20 room to talk to Chairman Hendrie on the telephone.
21 Commissioners dispersed.)
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1018 108

144