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

Mr. George H. Barbour, President
Board of Public Utilities
New Jersey Department of Energy
1100 Raymond Boulevard
Newark, New Jersey 07102

Dear Mr. Barbour:

This is in response to your letter of April 9, 1979 addressed to Chairman Hendrie regarding construction of the Forked River Nuclear Station by Jersey Central Power and Light Company. Chairman Hendrie has asked me to respond to your letter in view of the fact that, under the NRC rules of practice, Chairman Hendrie and the members of the Commission may be called upon to review decisions regarding construction of the Forked River plant and, hence, it would be inappropriate for him or other members of the Commission to comment on the matters raised in your letter.

I apologize for not providing this response to you sooner but the accident at Three Mile Island and its consequences have created a substantial increase in the agency's workload, which has prevented me from responding to you as promptly as I would have liked to.

As you are undoubtedly aware, the NRC and others have been engaged in examining the accident at Three Mile Island Unit 2 and how the occurrence of such an accident at other nuclear power plants can be prevented. These examinations will result in issuance of publicly available reports that address the many facets being investigated. Some of these reports have already been issued, and actions have been taken by the NRC and the industry concerning plant design and operation that are intended to improve safety and reduce risks to the public.

Although our present efforts have concentrated on the units at Three Mile Island and on other reactors either operating or expected to be licensed soon for operation, we will be applying what we have learned to plants, such as Forked River, that are in earlier stages of construction. Construction of the Forked River plant was stopped by JCP&L shortly after occurrence of the Three Mile Island accident. JCP&L has stated that resumption of construction probably will not occur for at least two years and that they will advise us of any decision to recommence engineering and construction activities. When that decision is made, we will then be able to apply more completely and effectively any additional

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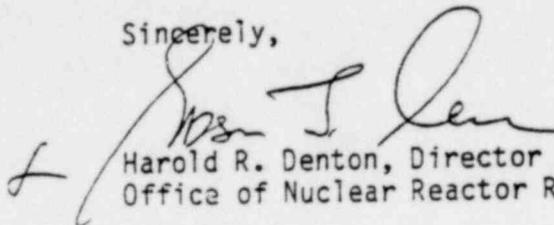
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Mr. George H. Barbour

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safety requirements that may be needed. Because final determination as to what improvements will be required for such latter plants will not be made for some time yet, I believe that discussions now about the probability of the Three Mile Island type incident occurring at the Forked River plant would be premature. However, when the investigations have been completed and the plans for improving safety at such plants as Forked River have been formulated, I would be happy to discuss them with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Harold R. Denton".

Harold R. Denton, Director
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

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