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

CHAIRMAN

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October 16, 1979

Mr. R. James Woolsey
Acting Secretary of the Navy
Department of the Navy
Washington, D. C. 20350

Dear Mr. Woolsey:

I am in receipt of your letter of August 31, 1979 concerning an alleged statement by Dr. Roger Mattson, Director of the Division of Systems Safety, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation (NRR), in which he proposed to industry representatives that they draw upon the Navy as a source of nuclear-qualified personnel for supervisory positions in commercial reactor control rooms.

First, let me assure you that it is not in any way Commission policy to promote industry overtures to Naval officers. I should note that it was not an "official" Commission meeting (i.e., held by the five Commissioners) at which the statement in question was made.

I have spoken with Dr. Mattson with regard to the circumstances and comments which you reference, and have determined the following. On August 1, NRR management, including Dr. Mattson, met with representatives of operating reactor licensees for a briefing on the "Lessons Learned" from the Three Mile Island nuclear accident. There was no official transcript taken at this briefing session (as is done at official Commission meetings), so it is impossible to determine exact statements. However, Dr. Mattson does recall informing the industry representatives that, in the future, NRC will be requiring the immediate availability at all times of a senior technical person, with a B.S. in engineering or equivalent high degree of training, to commercial reactor control rooms. He further stated that, since these individuals will be working on shift, industry would have to pay them well to compensate them for the personal disadvantages of shift work. He noted that even if industry had to pay $50,000 per year to get the right people, it was money well spent to attract and keep them. He compared the nuclear industry's situation with that of commercial aviation, in which the airlines could always attract qualified pilots for the more unattractive runs, such as the so-called "redeye" flights, by providing levels of pay appropriate to the degree of discomfort experienced.

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When asked by industry representatives where they could look to find the manpower, Dr. Mattson responded that there were several sources: their own companies, i.e., people from the ranks; qualified junior college and college graduates whom they could provide with the necessary further training; and ex-Naval officers. Dr. Mattson pointed out that industry presently uses a lot of ex-Navy operating personnel because their experience is very good, and that may be a good indicator that former Navy engineering officers would therefore be another potential source for the required personnel. His inference was that industry should seek out such individuals after they leave the Navy, but apparently he was misunderstood by some in his audience on recommending that they make overtures to nuclear-trained naval officers on active duty.

Once again, I assure you that this is not Commission policy, nor was it Dr. Mattson's intent to promote industry forays on the Navy's nuclear-trained personnel. I convey Dr. Mattson's apologies for this misunderstanding. We at NRC fully realize the difficulties you have experienced in retaining these men and their critical importance to our national security and defense. The Commission and its staff will take special pains to prevent a recurrence of any misinterpretation of our requirements which might jeopardize your nuclear programs and staffing.

Nevertheless, Commissioner Bradford notes that we cannot ignore our responsibility to assure that persons with an adequate degree of training are present in reactor control rooms. To the extent that our requirements in this area must be increased, the market for qualified individuals will inevitably tighten. We will be glad to work with you to minimize the impact on the Navy, but we see no way to avoid the problem altogether. Commissioner Ahearne disagrees with this position, as indicated in the attached letter.

Sincerely,

Joseph M. Hendrie

Enclosure:
As stated

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