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OVERSIGHT

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

April 25, 1979



Honorable Joseph M. Hendrie
Chairman
Nuclear Regulatory Commission
1717 H St., NW
Washington, D.C. 20555

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Austin citizens recently voted to retain the municipally-owned utility's 16% share in the South Texas Nuclear Project, built in partnership with other cities and firms. This was the correct decision in my opinion.

The election attracted national attention, because it was billed as the first referendum on nuclear power since the mishap at Three Mile Island. A majority of voters was willing to authorize additional bond sales to finance increased costs, while maintaining confidence in nuclear power as an energy source.

Other voters saw their faith shaken by the events at Three Miles Island. Everyone--regulators, the industry and consumers--discovered that as much as we know about atomic energy, we still have more to learn.

I am therefore writing you to request some answers, relating to the South Texas Nuclear Project.

The STP uses a Westinghouse design, which reduces the likelihood of an accident similar to the Babcock and Wilcox plant in Pennsylvania. However, I have read of possible problems with the Westinghouse steam generators. What has the NRC found about this potential flaw, and has it been explored at the Texas plant?

In view of Three Mile Island, can you tell if Westinghouse

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designs in general, or the South Texas Project in particular, will require modifications? Will the Commission conduct a safety review of the facility?

I would also like to know how the commission monitors actual construction in Matagorda County. Are personnel stationed at the site, or are there routine or surprise inspections?

All parties in the South Texas Nuclear Project have a tremendous economic and health investment at stake. Regulation of nuclear power must be efficient, yet deliberate.

Nuclear energy should have a strong role in the production of electricity. This role should not be eliminated because of either human or mechanical errors. Your assistance in answering these questions will help us move forward on the South Texas Nuclear Project with confidence.

Sincerely,

J. J. PICKLE

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