

COLE SOUTH UTILITIES, INC/BOX 61005/NEW ORLEANS, LA 70161/(504) 529-5262

FLOYD W. LEWIS
CHAIRMAN/CHIEF EXECUTIVE

August 1, 1979

(4)
V.R. [unclear]



Mr. Joseph M. Hendrie
Chairman
Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D. C. 20555

Dear Mr. Hendrie:

As you know, the industry formed a major Ad Hoc Oversight Committee following the accident at Three Mile Island for the purpose of taking industry responsibility for nuclear safety and other associated activities, and I have been serving as Chairman. This Committee has been given information about the reaction of the Commission with respect to the opening of TMI-1. We view with concern the NRC proposal that this unit be subject to the very lengthy and broad-ranging review procedure reported in the press, which, in addition to representing a serious financial burden to the customers of the utility involved, will prolong the uncertainty in the public perception of nuclear power.

Our industry believes that restoring public confidence in the Nuclear Regulatory Commission as an effective government agency is a key element in restoring public confidence in nuclear power. With this in mind, we believe that TMI-1 could provide an opportunity for demonstrating that the NRC can act expeditiously in resolving a uniquely important issue, and thus enhance public confidence. In addition, it is urgent that TMI-1 be placed into full operation as rapidly as possible in support of the President's program of developing all our available energy resources.

It appears to us that TMI-1 contains no substantive technical issues which materially differentiate it from the other B&W nuclear stations now being reactivated on a continual basis. Therefore, we see no reason why the NRC technical review procedures need be applied again to this particular case. On the other hand, we do recognize that there are serious concerns in the population near TMI-1 which are of a policy nature, and there may also be managerial concerns relating to the operating utility. Both of these issues are of a non-technical nature, and while they are certainly deserving of review, they represent issues not likely to be decided upon by a routine staff procedure. Certainly, they will ultimately come to the Commission for decision. It is this special nature of TMI-1 which we believe deserves special handling by the NRC, and the highest priority attention by the Commissioners.

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We recognize the need for new NRC hearings. They certainly would provide assurance to the residents surrounding TMI-1 that the licensing of that station is being approached with diligence. The hearings would also provide an opportunity for any new facts to be presented that may have been developed in the several studies now being completed of TMI-2. Finally, they would certainly provide an opportunity to reassure the public that the managerial approach to the reactivation of TMI-1 has been properly considered and organized. Our principal concern is with the protracted nature of the proposed schedule reported in the media which appears to overlook the unusual nature of the TMI-1 issue.

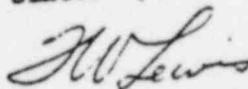
If the TMI-2 accident justified the appointment of a Presidential Commission, it would appear that the TMI-1 situation justifies direct hearings by the five NRC Commissioners, recognizing the demand on their time involved. Under such circumstances, the Commissioners would have an opportunity to arrive at a decision much more expeditiously than the normal procedures would permit, at the same time providing the opportunities for public participation. The NRC staff could continue to be used in an advisory capacity wherever needed.

In support of such a special hearing procedure, our utility industry Ad Hoc Oversight Committee proposes to make the management and technical resources of our industry appropriately available to Metropolitan Edison as a supplement to their internal organization. We believe this would relieve public concern on the management issue uniquely pertinent to TMI-1, and therefore should permit the Commission to move rapidly in this case. We request a meeting with you and your staff to discuss how such industry assistance might be provided.

If there are broad generic issues of nuclear power policy that the Commission may also wish to review on a more extended schedule, this should be done separately rather than as a part of the TMI-1 procedure.

We urge that the NRC give serious consideration to such a special hearing for TMI-1 and to our industry's offer as a positive means of expediting our national program in developing available energy resources.

Sincerely,



Floyd W. Lewis, Chairman
Ad Hoc Nuclear Oversight Committee

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