



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

September 17, 1979

MEMO

SUBJECT: SCHEDULE OF TMI WITNESSES-SEPTEMBER 20 and SEPTEMBER 21, 1979

TO: MEMBERS, Select Committee-TMI

FROM: James L. Wright, Jr., Chairman

The following will appear before the Select Committee TMI on September 20 and September 21, 1979. The Hearings will begin at 10:00 A.M., each day, in the House Majority Caucus Room.

SEPTEMBER 20, 1979

Dr. Gordon K. MacLeod, Secretary of Health
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Thomas M. Gerusky, Director, Bureau of Radiation
Protection, DER, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Dr. Fred Rapp, Associate Provost and Dean,
Professor & Chairman, Department of Microbiology,
Hershey Medical Center, Hershey, PA.

James Elder, Schoolteacher, Saxton, PA.

✓ SEPTEMBER 21, 1979

Joseph Higgins, Manager, CBS Affiliate, WHP

Saul Koehler, Executive Editor, The Patriot

Honorable Sheldon Parker, General Manager,
Pa. Public Television Network

Larry J. Messinger, News Director, Technical
Operators, Pa. Public Television

Michael J. Ziegler, Executive Vice-President
WITF, Channel 33

Paul Critchlow, Governor's Press Secretary

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COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE - THREE MILE ISLAND

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In re: Three Mile Island Hearing

Verbatim record of hearing
held in the Majority Caucus
Room, Main Capitol Building,
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, on
Friday,

September 21, 1979
10:00 A.M.

HON. JAMES L. WRIGHT, JR., Chairman
Hon. Bernard F. O'Brien, Vice Chairman
Hon. Nicholas B. Moehlmann, Vice Chairman
Hon. Eugene Geesey, Secretary

MEMBERS HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE - THREE MILE ISLAND

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Reported by:
Nancy J. Adelman

Dorothy M. Malone
Registered Professional Reporter
135 S. Landis Street
Hummelstown, Pennsylvania 17036

ALSO PRESENT:

Fred Taylor, Esquire, Counsel

Marshall Rock, Assistant Director of Research

Peg Feran, Administrative Assistant

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CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: With this hearing today, the House Select Committee on Three Mile Island is down its formal investigative hearings on the areas of responsibility assigned to this Committee by the House of Representatives. We do anticipate holding at least one more meeting on the subject of energy in general with representatives from the Governor's Energy Council and alternate energy interests as we were charged in the resolution to look at the role of nuclear power in the state.

As of today, the Committee has held 20 hearings and heard from over 150 witnesses from the professional sector, the public sector and the administration.

The Committee intends to meet its mandated deadline and report to the House of Representatives on October 25th. We hope that the report, at that point, is complete and we may have to work up a final draft after we see what the Presidential Commission in Washington has to say about their responsibility. Some of you know, we have been trading testimony back and forth.

In the course of the hearings the Committee has heard from all of the significant Cabinet officers, public health officials, communications officials, and on today's agenda, from the media.

On today's agenda the Committee is looking into the impact of the media in relationship to the TMI incident. With us today are Mr. Joseph Higgins who is the General Manager of WHP, the CBS affiliate; Mr. Saul Koehler, Executive Editor of the Patriot Evening News; the Honorable Sheldon Parker, General Manager, Pennsylvania Public Television Network; Larry J. Messinger, News Director, Technical Operators, Pennsylvania Public Television; Mr. Michael Ziegler, Executive Vice President of Channel 33; and Mr. Paul Critchlow, the Governor's Press Secretary.

Our first witness will be Mr. Joseph Higgins. This is kind of nasty, Joe. They said you would be here if you were not out playing golf -- from WHP Radio and Television.

JOSEPH HIGGINS, called as a witness, being duly sworn by Chairman Wright, testified as follows:

CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: I assume you'd like to make an introductory statement. If you do, we'd like to hear it.

MR. HIGGINS: My introductory statement has to deal with the fact that I am very pleased to be here and I'm looking forward to whatever material. I'm deeply dedicated to the news business and particularly in the broadcasting industry and I think that this hearing or series of hearings, and in particular today, is going to be very very revealing to all of

you and I hope we tell you some new information and if it isn't new, I just hope we review what you thought you knew. Thank you very much.

BY CHAIRMAN WRIGHT:

Q I think it's safe to say that in our conversations with our witnesses, we have found that in most situations the broad area of communications was a major problem in the accident that happened at Three Mile Island. To paraphrase, A told B what was going on but F forgot to tell G what was going on. We have not talked to you people yet. We are today. We have found department heads who passed down information to one level and somebody at the local level didn't get the information and was guessing as to what the results were or what the proper information was and, frankly, more often than not, had to rely upon the media, at least out in the field and at the local levels; and then make their decisions based on what the media was telling them. What was your experience in getting accurate information?

A We never knew when we had accurate information. No time did we think that what we knew at the moment we knew it, that was the end of the line.

If I may take you back to the Wednesday and then the Thursday and then the Friday and then the Saturday and then

the Sunday and then say on Monday, it was almost -- the story was over for all practical purposes on Monday from a beginning point on Wednesday.

The Wednesday point began so early in the morning and it was such a story that you had to verify. Our people knew it for better than an hour before we put it on the air because they couldn't get comfortable that this was right. So, after it finally did break and then all day Wednesday and then Thursday, when calls started coming in from around the country, most had to deal with credibility and I would say the part that was most bothersome to us was not the accuracy of the story, but the credibility of what we were hearing and I would say that the major news people around the country and around the world tackled credibility until Monday. And on the Wednesday, the Thursday, and by Thursday night, you could feel that the credibility story was -- that credibility was the story, not the accident. They wanted to report the accident but where do you get to this credibility.

Now, many of the news media and I will support, and I'm talking broadcast now, and I would support the network for having told what they knew and didn't fabricate stories in the sense of fabricating stories that you would go out and dream as to making up something. But when you couldn't get to the

answer and you couldn't get the story, you are going to ask the same question a dozen times. That was credibility.

I personally received calls from New York, Appleton, Wisconsin, Knoxville, Tennessee -- Joe, what's going on; tell us; put it on the air. Friday, at eleven o'clock, I got a call personally from Bristol, England -- Joe, is your health okay; I got it at the station. So, you see, around the country and around the world, the credibility they didn't know. And I said to my friend in Bristol, oh, it will be all over this afternoon. They said it's going to wind up about a half hour or an hour from now. Well, by Friday afternoon, the credibility story was even more intense. We started getting telephone calls from CBS and they started sending in some of their real hot shot, what I would term as investigative reporters or reporters that knew how to dig and dig deep for a story. Not only did reporters come into our stations from CBS and Boston and Los Angeles and New York and Philadelphia, but we were getting other calls from stations around the country as to what is the story; what is the story.

We elected to put on radio the kinds of stories that we thought were originating from Met Ed at that time so that the people could make up their minds as to what was the story or what was the news conference saying and let them make

up their own minds.

Q Where did the credibility or lack of credibility exist; administration, NRC, Met Ed?

A I would have to say that when the news conferences were being held, there was not a confidence from what little the language of what the reports attending knew of the language of nuclear energy. They didn't have confidence that what they were hearing is what they thought they knew and when they would ask the question in another form, a different kind of answer would come out which created credibility. With credibility, you are going to have some people that are going to dig and dig and dig for the story. They are not going to be satisfied with Met Ed and what they're saying. They are going to go behind the scenes. They are going to go ask people on the street, what do you think; what do you know. And that is when, if there was a communications problem, it was the fact that they were scattered all over trying to find something that had the same story twice; were saying the same things at the same time, the same way. As an example, on Saturday around eleven o'clock, the Vice President of Met Ed said do you expect us to tell you everything we're doing? Damn right they did. They wanted it. This is the news media. They are there. So, from a credibility story -- when Denton came in on the scene

and when President Carter came in on Sunday, that's when you could feel credibility was beginning. Up from Wednesday to Sunday, I think the story was credibility.

Now, where do you get credibility? How do you get credibility? It's a story; tell me and let me make sure that I'm hearing the same thing more than once. That's what you are doing with this whole hearing. You hear a lot of things and if everything has a pattern and you are hearing it the same way many times, you say well, that must be the story. That must be what's going on. That must be the thread of thought.

Q In your opinion, was the problem a lack of knowledge on the part of the people?

A I think the reporters didn't understand the language. They heard words they never heard before. They had to go to dictionaries. They had to ask people. As an example, on Friday afternoon, in comes a fellow from Long Island, a radiologist that CBS hired. He comes in with all his counters and he gets a helicopter and he goes around over Three Mile Island and he's doing his own measuring on his own terms. Now, he had never been in a broadcast station. He didn't know anything about broadcasting but he knew radiology. When he came in our station around five or six o'clock on

Friday evening; maybe it was later, 6:30; he said there's nothing up there; I don't know what these people are all excited about radiation. His job, and he was with our station for a week, his job was to examine the copy written by the CBS people to make sure for accuracy. A couple of the stories didn't, a couple of parts of the stories didn't go and one complete story didn't go because the writer wasn't accurate in the eyes of this radiologist.

One other thing I probably should inject is how our relationship was with the network. On Wednesday, the accident; Thursday, as I mentioned to you, the credibility and the wanting to get a lot of stories. CBS ordered a telephone line connected to our transmitter or to our line that feeds out to the transmitter so that it was always active, 24-hours a day, and that went on for over a week so they could here in New York, in the News Department, what all of the information that we were putting on radio.

Q We have heard the allegation that the accuracy or the degree of emotionalism in the media varied by the distance from Harrisburg.

A No doubt about that. I think it's an interesting -- I have a concept that I think is interesting in how copy is written or copy is rendered or a story is developed and how

the story is rendered in proportion to how close you are to the accident. In Harrisburg, we know how to relate to the local people. We know how to phrase our stories, our phraseology, our sentence construction and the way the story will flow. We wouldn't know how to tell that story to Los Angeles. Los Angeles people were in our shop. I got interested in Boston; Philadelphia even; New York and in Los Angeles. We fed, we, the station was used by KMY on Friday night, Saturday night; I don't think Sunday; Monday and Tuesday at 9 p.m. our time, six o'clock Los Angeles time, from our studio. I went in. I wanted to hear how these fellows were telling that story. I didn't even know we lived in Harrisburg. I didn't even know this was the same story. They related differently than how we were relating it here.

Q Why?

A Because they see it differently. When they walked down the street and saw it was empty, maybe ten o'clock in the morning, eight o'clock in the morning, they related nobody on the street. They didn't say it was eight o'clock in the morning. That was immaterial as far as they were concerned. To us it was important. I don't mean to be a comedy. I mean to get across -- even Philadelphia, I didn't understand the stories and I thoroughly didn't understand when the Inquirer,

this guy and a gal were outside a motel and however they were getting a story and she related later in the Wall Street Journal that it was guerilla journalism. That's what she called her type of reporting.

When there is a total shuck in a community and into these investigative minded reporters which are coming on the scene more and more in the broadcast industry, these people are to be reckoned with. They know how to get a story. They will ask you the same thing, Mike Wallace, last night, kept asking this same story. CBS went on this thing for almost seven minutes last night. They know how to ask you the same thing. They train themselves. They write this copy and when they get in to an unsuspected guy -- I'd never face Mike Wallace. He'd tear me apart. He tears these people apart. That's what Harrisburg was inandated with. They had some of the best minds -- I still think CBS sent in some of their very best people. If I may, not ramble, by Monday morning and that Sunday night Shackner story which was devastating, I thought, when he was telling about all of the animals in the story and the people I talked with on Monday morning in the course of business, it killed them. What the hell is CBS doing. So, I called Bill Leonard, the President of CBS and a good friend of mine and I can talk to him straight away. I

said, Bill, we're not in the same world. What in the world are you guys doing? His answer to me was, Joe, the story is all over. It's all good. Credibility has been resolved. We know where we are. Now, it's a matter of running it down and that's what it was. Although, it was the lead story on CBS News for another week. But to them, it was over because the credibility -- they knew they were getting the story; they knew they were getting facts; they knew they could depend on it and, therefore, it was a matter of rendering the story; giving the story; keeping you updated, but the credibility was established. That's where my concept is. That wasn't a lack of communication. It wasn't A said to B or B said to C. These guys will find it. You just can't believe how they will do it. There are so many investigative reporting teams been established in broadcasting today that these teams are reporting to the President and General Manager of the station and not to the News Director because there are as many stations in the country who will break and enter for a story as there are that won't. They want to keep you -- you see, this thing is so big and was so powerful --

Q By break and enter, what do you mean?

A Break the law. They'll scale a fence. I don't endorse it.

CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Fred Taylor?

BY MR. TAYLOR:

Q Joe, it's very nice that you are a very law abiding citizen, depending on whether or not you are on the golf course.

A I stay in bounds.

Q Joe, one of the purposes for which we are meeting here today is to discuss what apparently has become a very serious problem. The Committee has heard testimony from I don't know how many people about the communications problem. As a matter of fact, take the extreme example, we had testimony from an individual who wasn't aware of the incident at Three Mile Island until he got a call from his brother in Rhode Island who was listening to, unfortunately CBS, and was informed in Rhode Island that Harrisburg was being evacuated. Now, that I consider somewhat irresponsible reporting. My question is I'm going to compliment you, the local stations in Harrisburg who did a wonderful job. Is there anything we can do or anything that you can suggest can be done to improve the communications between the people on the scene and the people reporting out of New York City, as you said, or reporting out of Los Angeles or Washington or whatever?

A You're bordering on controlling the media, the news. If you set up a bureau for information, that's one thing, but

to try to control news and say you can't say this or you can't say that, there is a way that that kind of journalism will be washed out and this kind of guy will get out of the industry because the industry basically won't accept that kind of irresponsible reporting. It would be very difficult to totally eliminate it but I think there are enough responsible broadcasters in the country that that story doesn't stand up; to be re-investigated, reassured. Time is in your favor. A thing like that might get out quick.

I think I should relate how I think stories like that get out. I think the fastest method of communication today is radio or audio on television but radio is the fastest and this story can pick up now, open the microphone, get it on the air. And it can be repeated the next hour and repeated the next hour. Probably the second quickest would be television; television can give you audio; television, as Walter Chronkite's stories did, they worked all day long and then at 6:30 at night, he went on the air. Those stories may have been from something they picked up in the morning or at noon or mid afternoon. They had video with them. They had the audio. They had the video. You may not have liked either or both but at least that story went on the air as much as four or five hours later. Now, a print guy may have picked up a story that

he heard either on the wires or off the air and then he decides they are evacuating and he puts it on the teletype and it gets out and if it breaks in the morning and you are a morning newspaper reader, you may not get that story until tomorrow. It breaks on Monday, you get it on Tuesday. If you are an afternoon reader and it may not break until noon, then you may not get it until Tuesday afternoon. So, a wrong piece of information could have broken on radio or television or the print and it depends on when it got to the people. We noticed a great deal of the stories and calls that we would receive, something may have been on a morning and we may not have heard or got back to it until the next afternoon simply because that's when the people got their information. Not everybody gets it by radio. Not everybody gets it by television. Not everybody gets it by newspaper but it's a combination of how everybody gets informed. So, when a story breaks like that from some irresponsible unfortunate story, it sometimes lingers until somebody finally checks it out.

Q Joe, I understand what you are saying. In other words, we can't stop the hot dog investigative reporter?

A No way.

Q But let me throw a thought on you and you can comment. Would it be sensible or would it make any sense,

in a situation like TMI which is immediate crises -- we are not talking about hurricanes or floods -- a situation like TMI or, let's say, a transportation disaster involving, let's say, chlorine gas or something that requires immediate reaction from the public. Would it make any sense to have some one source of communication, information, concerning that accident available to you, the broadcast media?

A It makes a lot of sense.

Q Let me preface this only because radio and television are almost instant reactions to it and, you know, in that context, okay.

A All right. When Denton came on the scene, the credibility story was over. If Denton had been on the scene on Thursday, I don't believe there would have been a story in the sense of lack of credibility. Yes, there would have been a story to render to the public but when he got on the scene and the confidence of everyone around, they knew they were getting the facts. They were confident. They were happy about what they were hearing in the sense that they knew what the story was; not that they had doubted the credibility. Yes, when some of these train accidents in Florida; when they started to evacuate the small communities, they had one source and they went to the railroad and they found a good source that they

could depend on and the story was told. It was on for a couple of days.

Q You were there --

A Yes. No doubt --

Q Have you thought about how to structure this, Joe?

A Well, if you knew what was going to happen next, I'd structure it for you. I think we are in an unstructured method of digging out news and when you turn that many people away, I mean out in the field, you'll never kill the peripheral story. You will never kill the sidebar. That is part of reporting.

Q I understand. Can we just move one step further. I think this Committee has heard testimony, over the last six months, that I think is very convincing that maybe the most damage that result to the populace in Central Pennsylvania may have been the psychological damage created by the conflicting news stories and the reports of the radiation that was or was not released. We have heard testimony that the radiation leakage was minimal. Now, we probably will never know exactly what it was. I think from the expert testimony we have heard, at least I feel that the exposure level was minimal and the after-effects that we are now seeing from TMI, I think, were created, and are probably more psychological than anything

else and I think that was created by the media.

A No question, it was.

Q Would this central communications system have resolved that problem, do you think, or would it still result in having the hot dog investigative reporter still doing their thing?

A You'll never eliminate the hot dog; you'll never eliminate the entrepreneur; you'll never eliminate the intensity of the reporting. I'm not really pleased and happy about Harrisburg and what -- I had the good fortune of having to go to Cannes, France. I had to go. I didn't want to go but I went because there was a TV film festival that I had paid my money in January and February and I didn't want to throw it away. I met people from Singapore -- what happened in Harrisburg? They heard it all -- I don't think the two of us were talking the same thing. I was with people in Paris. People from Paris have been to our station since this. They didn't hear it. We ran a couple of the news stories for a dozen people from France, not just Paris, but the New York Times -- they spent a day at the Washington Post. They didn't hear it the way we heard it. Yes, there is a way that you report a story locally and there is a way that you report it that goes across the country and it's two different styles of writing and

two different styles of rendering a thought. Magazines write differently than we write. I don't believe we know here today all the problems they are having in Mobile, Alabama. I want to go down there and I can't even get down there to see if I have a reservation and I doubt if I will have it from what I hear. But we don't hear much about it now. They are having a lot of problems locally. I think Harrisburg -- I think this is too bad and I don't think it can be avoided.

Q One wrap-up question, Joe. Your people on the scene, your reporters that were on the scene, did they have any particular problems?

A They had the same as everybody else. We had a problem when we wanted to get a telephone message back. We had problems getting, not talking to people and not asking whatever we wanted to ask but we were only privileged to know what was in the news conference and that's when we elected, as a station policy, to put the news conference on the air to allow people, as they heard it, to make up their minds what they were hearing. They heard it differently than a lot of other people. We had no problems of getting a story.

Q O.K. Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Representative Geesey?

BY REPRESENTATIVE GEESEY:

Q Joe, I want you to know that I have firsthand knowledge of the Inquirer's guerilla journalism. I'm glad we can laugh now. It wasn't funny at the time.

A No, it really wasn't.

Q In looking back at this whole thing, Joe, in going back to that Wednesday and that Thursday and that Friday, how much of the problem do you feel was with the lack of knowledge of Met Ed's part of understanding what was happening versus overall credibility?

A They were the source of information and when you're the source of information, you have to stand the test of are you telling me it all; are you holding back; are you being loyal to your company; are you being concerned about the people in the community. It's the whole stance of the thought processes, the digging up of information processes that these people who are going to render the story have to be satisfied that they feel like they have it and Met Ed may have been as honest and loyal to their company as they could possibly be but they didn't feel like they had the story.

Q Do you think that their personnel really understood what was happening at the time?

A I would give Met Ed total credit that they did the best that they could but it didn't come off. That's the way

our people felt. Our people never said they were trying to dodge something. They just didn't feel like that they knew it all.

Q Did, and I didn't see this news broadcast but did Chronkite ever retract the 100,000 evacuation?

A I didn't know he said that. I was not aware that he said 100,000 evacuation. He may have couched it in an alleged. I would doubt that a -- if they made a positive statement and it was wrong, they would retract it by policy.

Q But you're not aware of it. The figure I heard, and again, I got it secondhand because somebody else told me, was that Chronkite said there was an evacuation of 100,000 people.

A Bear in mind, in a lot of cases when we are hearing things, don't forget, you're dealing with word merchants.

Q Oh, I'm very well aware of that.

A They make a living on words.

Q Yes, indeed they do, regardless of the price some people pay. When did you first get the story of the bubble?

A I would be guessing. It might have been Thursday. It might have been Friday. It might have been Saturday. There are a few things that stand out in my mind as to when I heard certain kinds of things. I devoted most of my time at the

station and I was there a considerable number of hours. I didn't have anything to do except oversee and watch and listen and I would go over and I would listen to our people and I would go and ask a few questions and I don't recall precisely when that bubble was unless it was Friday afternoon.

Q Well, what had happened was that someone who had time was watching the tube and got the story of the bubble on the tube somewhere Friday. I think it was around seven or twelve o'clock. At that point, they called me.

A PM or AM?

Q AM.

A AM. That Friday night Walter Chronkite had an hour show and three or four pieces of that Chronkite show that night originated in our studio and I know there were some people drawing and they asked our artists to do certain kinds of drawings but I don't recall precisely that it was the bubble.

Q The thing that bothers me is that whoever heard it gave me a call and said what does it mean and I had a guy stationed in PMEA so that I could get more accurate information on an hourly basis and was able to more accurately relay it to my constituency and I called him and said what's the story on the bubble and what happens if this whole thing goes

to its ultimate and he immediately relayed the question to the PMEA people and they were completely unaware of the existence of a bubble at that time. Now, they were able to explain finally the consequences. But, apparently, the bubble was there. It was reported by the tube but PMEA, sitting here in Harrisburg, didn't know it.

A Is that so? Of course, that I don't know.

Q That bothers me.

A I would add too, how you could have been bothers; that information could come from three sources. One, don't forget the networks were tapped into Bethesda for an awful lot of information that originated in Bethesda. It originated here and with our people, and putting together with our artists and this fellow that we finally loved that we called Harry Radiation, and he was in there constantly, looking at the drawings and the copy that went with it, and then from what we might have gotten from Met Ed.

Q I think you could probably patent a doll that lights up in the dark after Harry Radiation.

A That's right.

Q In looking back at this whole thing, what kind of changes would you like to see or do you think should occur in the event of an accident of this type or some other type were

to occur in the future so that the information can be gotten across to the public accurately?

A You have to dig out and this would be a digging process. Dig out a person who has the most knowledge so that they can be the center source of information and you've got to go one place. You can't gotten places. Denton did it.

Q A Denton type on the scene immediately?

A The first order of business should be who is the best person that knows the most that we can get right now and then he knows how to disseminate information.

Q O.K. Thank you, Joe.

CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Representative Reed?

BY REPRESENTATIVE REED:

Q Mr. Chairman, Mr. Higgins has already answered the question I was going to ask with regard to how he viewed the performance of Metropolitan Edison people. Joe, your point with regard to the single voice is a major lesson to be learned from Three Mile Island and would have avoided a great many problems and I think statutorily that can be dealt with as far as Pennsylvania government is concerned. It's a point well taken.

A May I add something that is an example of how the

story gets told and gets settled down and I'll only take 45 to 60 seconds. In 1972, in the flood, on Friday when we lost the power downtown, our station was putting everybody on the air. They were on the air Friday. Friday, the main story on Friday was money; how can we get money. Money was the big issue on Friday. Saturday the bankers opened up at filling stations and homes and they made money available on Saturday and Sunday. Monday, the story was over because the people that didn't get their checks began to call and say where can I get my welfare check and we had to take them off the air because they were getting too ugly and their conversation was mean. So, we took them off the air and discontinued the dialog of having people tell each other on the air. The story was over. The story was over when Denton came in. Now, don't misunderstand me that I'm belittling it. I'm just saying that once they started and knew where they were, then it was reported for a week. CBS had a story of a woman named Nunau (phonetic) who gave birth to a child, moved down to Maryland. How in the world these people knew that she was going to come home a week or ten days later and how in the world they knew that there was going to be a sign in the house, "Welcome Home - Happy To Have You Here." Jerry Landis, CBS, is a great guy for getting tough stories. He's assigned to that. He goes down there and she's crying,

get out of here. And instead of being happy, it was mean, ugly. CBS had it on the air, six o'clock, seven o'clock, nine o'clock AM, big audience across the country. The Nunau's got telephone calls from all over the country -- I'll pay your way to come to our home. CBS was assigned the story thinking it was going to be a happy occasion. It turned out ugly. It was a story. They put it on the air. I wish they hadn't. I asked CBS to take it off. Hell no, no way. It ran its course, died. Pardon me.

CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Representative O'Brien?

BY REPRESENTATIVE O'BRIEN:

Q Yes. Joe, I asked some of the fellows up here who Joe Higgins was and they said he has one of the best reputations in the city. I asked who Joe Higgins was and they said you're one of the -- the one that is in the broadcasting, in the news media, that has one of the best reputations. So, I'm very happy to ask you a couple of questions. But I'd like you, and I'm not defending the company, but I want to go back to the start where Lt. Governor Scranton first had his interview and I happened to be at that interview and he came out and only was informed with the information, at that particular time, supplied by the company that came out of the plant. The accident happened at approximately four o'clock. The words

did not come out to the plant, to the news media until probably seven o'clock. Lt. Governor Scranton, the information that he had at the time of his news conference, was only told about the accident but was not informed about when it happened or anything else. We had the company here and asked both Denton and the company why they did not notify anyone sooner and they said through normal procedure, they try to get everything under control. My question to you is don't you feel that what happened at that news conference, the news media tore down the company's credibility at that time by saying headlines, "Company Does Not Inform Anyone Until Seven O'clock That Accident Happens At Four O'clock."

A Your question is what?

Q My question is the headlines come out that they are holding something back. The company feels they did not hold back. NRC feels they did not hold anything back.

A I defend the company.

Q You would: you would defend the company?

A They didn't hold back. They didn't know what they had. They didn't know the extent to what they had. Now, we get an awful lot -- all news people get an awful lot of so-called leads and tips and various information. Many times you run it down and it's nothing. It's not the story. They probably, at that stage of the game, didn't know what they had.

They probably had hoped, and I would give them a lot of credit for hoping that it might go away. Listen, this hope of might go away plays a very important part but when it doesn't go away, the cost is very high.

Q O.K. I'm for freedom of speech. Some of the things you testified to here today -- in other words, some reporters do not tell the story the way it is. Now, there has got to be something done in the country where if you are going to have freedom of speech, don't you think that there should be some way that you and the industry should control such reporting that is going to hurt the character or ruin a company or something like that?

A See, I would be any part of a company that would allow people to do as some do. As I mentioned, I went to a very powerful meeting last year where this breaking and entry and the laws and reporting, integrity, credibility -- I am of that grain of credibility. I don't understand that in other people and there is no way, in my world, I can get to them. I wouldn't hire --

Q I wish we had more like you in the industry because I believe that there are many in the industry that look only, and I have been in the newspaper. I worked in the newspaper. And the old story in the newspaper, the headline sells the

paper, not what the story is.

A We had a photographer who was on the job three days in Harrisburg. This fellow that had all of the guns and the ammunition in the basement and the dog was killed. The woman said if you photo me, I won't come out. Our guy says we won't photo you. She came out, he photoed here, we put her on the air, he was fired that night.

Q Going back to what you said about Denton, and I'm not belittling him. I think he did a good PR job. But let's take Denton as compared to what the company was giving. You said the credibility of the company was down and as soon as Denton came in, it brought the credibility up because Denton came in. Denton, Saturday morning, with Collins, acknowledged that there should have been an evacuation. He didn't know. And the many things that Denton, he may have been telling the truth, but he didn't know any more than the public knew. He was not bringing any information to the news media any more than the company was doing.

A He had a terrible -- he sat in a wonderful, advantageous position by the company putting material together on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and when he comes in on the scene, he has an awful awful lot of background information that he can put together and go down the line. A new man on the block

c. a new kid on the block, a lot of times, gets more respect quicker than somebody that has been trying to build it up.

Q Joe, the point I'm trying to bring out of you is the press killed the credibility of the company, not the company killed the credibility themselves. Am I right or wrong?

A The sum total of all stories in this sequence was damaging to the company, no doubt about it, because if, in my estimation, credibility wasn't the story at the beginning; then I would have to say my whole assumption was wrong. My assumption was, from the very beginning, credibility became the story and the material was what's happening at Met Ed. But credibility was where these people began to question what's going on.

Q That's all.

CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: I think it would be proper for us to say thank you for, I guess, putting a little different content on something that has been bothering us, communications. You used the term credibility. I think probably we understand that terminology somewhat better than we did before. I'm sitting here at a loss. I don't know how you legislate credibility. I suspect you can't.

MR. HIGGINS: I would subscribe to that.

CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: I suspect it's, in part, a native bility that some people have and some people don't have. But anyway, thank you for being with us. We appreciate it very much.

MR. HIGGINS: Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Our next witness is Mr. Saul Koehler, Executive Director of the Patriot Evening News.

SAUL KOEHLER, called as a witness, being duly sworn by Chairman Wright, testified as follows:

CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Saul, would you like to make an opening statement?

MR. KOEHLER: Mr. Chairman, I pass up the opening statement and let you ask the questions. You have demonstrated that you know the areas you are talking about. I'd like to speak to those as you bring them up.

BY CHAIRMAN WRIGHT:

Q As we indicated here to the previous witness, there was a great degree of problems in the area of communications. Joe, you know, talked about credibility. What kind of problems did your people experience in those first couple of days in collecting the news, in interpreting statements made at press conferences, both qualitatively and quantitatively?

A We had a problem that was unparalleled in American journalism. We were reporting a local story for local people. It was our aim and, I believe, we fulfilled our goal, to report in a manner which would not incite to panic. We tried to check everything, not once but twice, in the approved so-called Watergate manner. We did everything we could not to frighten the people. There were a lot of things that we saw on television from, in Joe Higgins' words, wordsmiths, not from Harrisburg which scared us primarily because we didn't know whether they were true.

I received a call at 6:15 in the morning. My cousin in Paris who was a radiologist called me on Saturday morning and said thank God you're alive. I said what happened. He said I called you Friday night and the telephone rang and we were convinced here in Paris that Harrisburg was a waste land and the phone was ringing and no one was alive to answer it. I said I had to be at my office and my wife was with her mother. Nobody was at home. He said we thought in Paris that Harrisburg had been leveled. There are people in our office who received calls from relatives in England who were convinced that Harrisburg International Airport had melted down, the turnpike no longer existed. It's true that the further away you get, the less careful you need to be. Actually, you need to be 100

percent accurate all the time. That's our job. That's our obligation in return for the First Amendment which gives us immunity from folks like you. But for every privilege, there is an obligation and our obligation is to report accurately and factually. We were prevented from reporting accurately and factually by Metropolitan Edison, by General Public Utilities, by the operators of Three Mile Island who did everything in their power, everything in their sphere of influence to minimize this accident, to minimize the potential consequences of this accident, be they psychological or actual, and we don't know yet and we won't know for 20 years whether there were actually any consequences here or whether it was all psychological and maybe in 20 years it won't matter. But I think until the President of the United States sent this combination Sam Irvol and Catfish Hunter, Harold Denton; this man in which everybody could have confidence, things were happening in all directions. I remind you gentlemen that the President of the United States ordered Mr. Denton to Harrisburg. I remind you that Mr. Denton knew and knows nuclear energy and nuclear reactors. We don't. I personally was across the street when I passed my physics laboratory in college. I know now that we need somebody available to give us accurate information, even if it's not welcome information when an accident occurs, if it

ever occurs again.

You ask what you could do. You asked about a single spokesman. I do not like the thought of a minister of information. I think, however, that the Commonwealth could write into its Public Utility Law just as the United States Congress could write into its Nuclear Regulatory Law, that if any nuclear plant is to operate, it is to have, on the premises at all times, and I mean 24 hours a day, a nuclear expert who also could be the informational source. And so they wouldn't have to import people from the home office and they wouldn't have to import the President of the United States to send somebody in here to report this but that somebody would be available.

I believe that if General Public Utilities and Metropolitan Edison had said immediately, not 7 A.M. or 9 A.M., but 4 A.M., we have had an accident. We don't know the consequences of that accident. We will keep you informed; that this Commonwealth and this country, maybe even this world, would have been better served. As it turned out, they didn't. What the public was told was that they would get the thing started again and the next thing we heard was people around Three Mile Island were going to see China Syndrome. Sorry for the filibuster, gentlemen.

Q No. It was good and you made a point which is not too dissimilar to a point that DER has made. You are suggesting somebody on site, you know, who has expertise in the nuclear field and also who can communicate as a press relations officer. DER has suggested that perhaps it may be a good idea that we have, in effect, a nuclear engineer on the state payroll who supervises, oversees, watches, each nuclear plant. Maybe not necessarily on site but perhaps located in Harrisburg, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia. So, at least, DER is somewhat more knowledgeable of what is going on and can act as an intervenor with the NRC during the periods when more approvals have to be issued.

I'd like to explore with you for a moment, and I suppose it's a philosophical thing, what makes the press more concerned, more responsible when they are dealing with their own backyard versus a story that is 200, 500, 1,000 miles away?

A Well, our responsibility -- our responsibility to our readers, to our subscribers, to our advertisers. We live here. We did everything we could, for example, to inform our people that even if the hubble should burst, it would be a chemical explosion, not a nuclear explosion and that there might be chemical damage; not pleasant, of course, but it would not be a nuclear reaction which could spread out or, at

least that's what we thought at the time. That's what we were told at the time. Yet, there was an out of town newspaper who talked about H Blast At N Plant in headlines which were about the size of World War III. That was irresponsible reporting for a newspaper published in and sold in Central Pennsylvania. It may not have been considered irresponsible for a newspaper published in New York or San Francisco or Texas.

Our responsibility is to keep our people informed. On Friday afternoon, March 30th, we had four editions of our evening paper. Starting with the first one, that the Governor considers evacuation. At that time, there was still a possibility of a wholesale evacuation. The second edition, the Governor had abandoned that. The next edition, the Governor was seeking ways to resolve it and finally, the Governor had recommended or ordered pregnant women and preschool children out of a three or five mile radius of the plant. There was no comment on that sort of thing. It was strictly fact, quoting the Governor; quoting the company; quoting the Department of Environmental Resources. Mr. Denton had not yet arrived on the scene. The President had not yet arrived on the scene.

Please remember we are as good as our sources. We are not baseball players. We are not nuclear physicists. We are only as good as what people tell us and when we are not

told the facts, we cannot report the facts.

Q Can you make any recommendations, and I'm not sure whether my question is appropriate or fair to ask you, but can you make any recommendations to this Committee in regards to changes in legislation or additional legislation that the General Assembly ought to consider in the area of emergency preparedness?

A I think you may have the wrong person on that, Mr. Chairman. I think your laws are adequate. I think there is an Emergency Preparedness Law. I think it can be interpreted to take in any kind of an emergency from a flood to a nuclear accident. I think if the state were ready for something like this, whether it be through DER or the Governor's Office or through each individual utility or installation or one person for the industry, somebody, that would be the answer. I would prefer that the industry does it frankly because I am a great believer in no legislation about the press. I'm a great believer in the First Amendment.

CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Fred, Fred Taylor?

BY MR. TAYLOR:

Q Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Saul, how many reporters did you have out?

A We had all of them, including sports writers, life

city reporters. We had anybody we could get.

Q O.K. And I guess at any point in time there were several of them down at Middletown?

A That's true.

Q Again, you said you got calls from France; you got calls from England --

A I even got calls from College Station, Texas.

Q The same thing, Rhode Island and around the country, calls were coming in from not only stories that had been seen on television but also newspaper reports and I saw the headline you mentioned which I thought was inflammatory, unnecessary and irresponsible. Was your newspaper or do you have any connection with AP or UPI or the wire services in putting out stories across the country?

A We are members.

Q And number two, on that, who was in there? You don't have to list them by names but did individuals papers send people to Middletown or were the wire services coming in? What it's trying to get at is who is responsible for the irresponsible stories or the inaccurate stories that were reported in the papers outside of the area? They had to originate with or from somewhere.

A Most newspapers of any size, and a lot that were

small, many of them worked right in this building in the newspaper correspondents' room on E Floor. Many of them worked in our office. At one point, we thought it might be necessary to open our Advertising Department over a weekend because there were typewriters and television sets and telephones available there. We had the Los Angeles Times and the Chicago Tribune and Lord knows who else. We must have had 100 of them. They drank our coffee machine dry. They used up all of the cigarettes in our cigarette machine. They ate up all the candy in our candy machine. They were welcome. They absolutely were welcome. What they did was their business. We considered what we did to be our business and we considered that we could not abandon our responsibility, not necessarily to scotch the world but to keep the people of this area from running to the banks, from running out of here before they were told where to go and how to go. We tried to keep away from panic. I like to think we succeeded. I'm pleased that Columbia Journalism Review gave us extraordinary high marks for having succeeded and I'm proudest of all about the people who work at the Patriot Evening News and the Sunday paper for the work they did. I didn't have anything to do with it. That was my first day on the job. I came to work about 90 minutes before the accident was reported.

Q Is that kind of welcome to work, Saul; here's your job for the day?

A Exactly.

Q What I'm trying to get to, Saul, is the fact that, repeating what I said to Joe Higgins, I think the Committee has heard about the psychological effects of the reporting of the accident and I think that's very significant and will be for years and my question to you, and I'd like you to respond again. The responsibility of the reporting of the outside press, do you have any comments about that?

A Well, you mean whether they were responsible?

Q Yes.

A Some of them, and I ask you not to insist on names, some of them were less than responsible. It is true, as the Chairman said, that the further you get from the scene, the more loose you can become with the facts and this was demonstrated in the Three Mile Island affair. The story, I suspect that had this thing been given a form in the beginning, this might not have occurred to the extent that it did occur. I resent the fact that spokesmen for the company sat here and in Washington and in Middletown and said the press didn't know what it was writing about. You bet your bottom dollars we didn't know what we were writing about because we weren't told

what we were writing about. Not only didn't we know what we were writing about, the Lt. Governor of this Commonwealth who is responsible for my welfare didn't know what he was talking about because he wasn't told the facts. Do something about getting the facts disseminated and you will have served the people of this state and this country well.

Q Thank you very much, Saul. I appreciate your feeling about an energy ministry but a source of information --

A An information ministry. An energy ministry, we've got.

CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Representative Reed?

BY REPRESENTATIVE REED:

Q Mr. Koehler, you have made comments concerning your opinion about Met Ed's initial mistake at the very beginning by not being up front about the fact that an accident occurred and that they did not know the consequences. We've had many months now to review the events of those critical four and five days, hour by hour; copies of press statements, of course, are still on file. What's your perspective on Met Ed's performance in those four and five days?

A I think it was a poor performance and I think Met Ed knows it now.

Q Why do you think it was poor?

A Because it was unreliable and to me the important thing at that time was reliability, accuracy. I would have been perfectly willing to tell the people of this area get out. If you live west of the Susquehanna River, go south; if you live east of the Susquehanna River, go north had I been told that that was the case by somebody who was responsible; whether that responsibility rested with Met Ed or the Governor's Office or the President of the United States is immaterial to me but somebody had the responsibility to tell us the facts.

Q When you say that they were no reliable, is that because they did not know the facts or because they withheld them?

A Steve, I don't know. I know they withheld them but whether it was because they didn't know it or because they didn't care to disclose them, I don't know and I wouldn't comment on that.

Q Do you believe that Metropolitan Edison's performance in this matter as well as other deficiencies which have been publicized pre TMI and even post TMI during this recovery period, do you believe that Metropolitan Edison deserves to receive permission from the NRC to operate, to restart Unit 1 and eventually to restart Unit 2?

A My personal opinion is that they should not restart

either Unit 1 or 2; they should entomb them and that they should cut out all nuclear power until they are ready. My problem is this. We have on the laws of this Commonwealth or on the books of this Commonwealth a law which says you must have your automobile inspected twice a year. When they inspect your car, they don't check the starting mechanism. They check the brakes. It's not the concern of the Department of Transportation whether you can start your car. They are only concerned with whether you can stop it in the event of an accident or an emergency or a situation which requires you to stop. If your brakes are no good, you don't get a sticker. Without a sticker, you do not drive. My question to Met Ed today, and it's still my question and it has to be, why don't you shut it off. Right now today, why don't you shut it off. Six months after the accident, and their answer will have to be we can't. And until they can, I personally don't feel we should have it but that's a personal opinion.

Q Thank you.

CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Representative Geesey?

BY REPRESENTATIVE GEESSEY:

Q Saul, first I'd like to compliment your paper for the job that they did. I think you not only did an excellent job of controlling what certainly would have existed had you

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not taken your approach but you did, I think, far and away the most credible job of reporting what really was going on down there. It was, I guess, sort of like a breath of fresh air on the first day of spring because the facts were there. The hysteria was not there. The panic was not there. The common sense was there and that really is what we needed at the time. You made what I thought was an interesting statement and I just want to see if there is any significance to the fact or to the statement. You said that the President ordered Denton here. Was there any hidden meaning behind that statement? Are you indicating that Denton didn't want to come?

A No. I'm indicating the fact that everybody, including the President of the United States, felt that somebody knowledgeable and that somebody with a certain amount of authority was necessary in this area and that even a man who came in here for one afternoon was able to sense that and then took one of his top aides, a man who had approved the operation of that very plant and sent him in here to be the source of information and the spokesman and the Governor's Office agreed and then things began to settle down.

Q And not until then.

A And not until then.

Q Thank you.

A Thank you for your kind words, Mr. Geesey.

Q They are true.

BY CHAIRMAN WRIGHT:

Q I'd like to follow up briefly with Gene Geesey's kind words. Both Carmen and Mary have been extremely attentive to this Committee. When you sit down to make up your merits, they should receive a gold star for their attendance at the sessions of this Committee over the last several months.

A Thank you.

CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Representative O'Brien?

BY REPRESENTATIVE O'BRIEN:

Q Saul, you made a statement saying you think -- it's your own personal opinion that they should close up the two plants down there and make a tomb out of them. Is this your own personal opinion?

A This is my own personal opinion, Mr. O'Brien.

Q When you write a story, does this sort of tie in with the feeling with the way you would write a story?

A I'm not in that business any more, Mr. O'Brien. I don't write stories.

Q You're not?

A I don't write stories any more. I wrote stories for 30 years. Now, I let other people do it for me.

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Q You're the boss?

A Exactly.

Q You are in a better position.

A Mr. Norman Dickamp, the President of General Public Utilities, sat in my office last week and told me, and I'm paraphrasing him. I'm not quoting. He said you can say whatever you want on your Editorial Page and I disagree with it but I must compliment you for the accuracy and dependability of what you are reporting outside in your news columns and I told Mr. Dickamp coming from him, that was the highest compliment we could be paid.

Q I think they are afraid of you.

A They are afraid of me?

Q Sure. I think it's the all powerful news media that can make or break somebody. You know that. You drafted Ted Kennedy. He didn't want to run. You drafted him.

A He? I'm the only guy in the world who admits to voting for Richard Nixon.

Q You think Ted is good for news and get Ted into it and you are going to have a lot of newspapers to sell. To get back to your personal feelings, your personal feeling is that they should shut down all nuclear plants in the United States?

A My personal feeling is that they should shut down

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nuclear -- my personal feeling is that the people in the area affected should be able to speak up as to whether they want a nuclear plant or not.

Q I would like to get the personal feeling of you, Saul. You feel, with the statement you made here today, that they should shut down all of the nuclear plants in the United States because you said they should shut the one down at Three Mile Island.

A That's correct. I feel that they should shut down all those nuclear plants where the people in that area want them shut down. I feel that the people in this area would vote to close Three Mile Island if they had the opportunity by secret ballot.

Q You said that at the present time you are not a reporter. You are more or less the boss?

A I'm an editor.

Q You make the decision. You influence the editorial page?

A I do not. I have one vote in an Editorial Board.

Q Is the Patriot editorial, have they taken your same position?

A Similar position, not as strongly as mine.

Q Not as strongly as yours. Do you think that you

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sort of influence their position?

A No, I don't think so. I believe that some of those people may have influenced mine.

Q What do you think of Denton? Do you have high regards? Do you think that -- what's your feeling with Denton?

A Dr. Denton?

Q Yes.

A I think he's one of the finest people in the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, of the staff people that is.

Q Do you believe -- do you agree with statements he made at most times?

A I don't agree with his statements on nuclear energy. That doesn't mean I have no respect for him. I don't always agree with Teddy Kennedy too.

Q I'm sorry to hear that.

A Or with Richard Nixon.

Q I don't blame you with Nixon. But getting back to Dr. Denton, Dr. Denton, before this Committee, made a statement and I don't know who asked him the question, but that Three Mile Island is one of the safest plants in the country. Why wouldn't the papers print that headline?

A The papers did.

Q I think I read it buried in a little story. Don't

you think that's a headline?

A We covered it. We had Dr. Denton's statement that this is a safe installation.

Q Don't you think that would be entitled to an editorial?

A We had an editorial responding to it, yes, and we also --

Q What was the editorial in response? I didn't see it.

A Our editorial said that regardless of what he said, we don't happen to agree. We think the people of this area should have a say on whether it opens. We also gave the Pennsylvania Electric Association, Mr. Brook Haitzen, two successive days in which to reply to our editorial and I have a letter in my file from him talking about accuracy and our dependability and our absolute down the middle reporting regardless of what our editorial policy was. Our reporting is accurate. Our reporting is dependable. It's people like Carmen and Hay, as the Chairman cited, who help make it that way. We report what people say. We editorialize our views. You're an old newspaper man, Mr. O'Brien.

Q Saul, I'm not defending Met Ed. I think the personnel themselves made many mistakes and I think the news-

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papers, over the years, many newspaper people make mistakes.

A No question about it.

Q We all make mistakes. But I do feel -- I was at a meeting in the Governor's Office or up at the home, an emergency meeting on a Sunday night, and he had CBS there and the city TV station that was there taking pictures before the meeting. The whole intent of the meeting on Sunday night was to let the legislators and everybody else, the top people, know that it is the feeling, the information that he got from Benton, that everything was under control but CBS and the news media came out the next day, "Emergency Meeting Called. Could Be Possible Evacuation." Senator Hager, at that particular meeting, said to the Governor, he wanted to put a release out saying what the Governor said but the Governor asked none of us to speak at what went on at that meeting. So, what I'm saying, you know, it was sort of lack of communication with government and with the company, with everybody else, but the news media, in my opinion, made its own stories up without checking them up.

A I beg to differ with you on that. I can no more be responsible for the activities of CBS than Joe Higgins can and he is a CBS affiliate. What they did may not have been accurate. You saw nobody from our office there that night. We

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did not talk about possible evacuation that Sunday night. Again, we tried to be as dependable and as accurate as we could.

Q Well, I can't criticize your paper because I occasionally read it.

A Occasionally criticize it.

Q But getting back to the area with Denton and the company, don't you feel that the news media, as a whole, has caused, at the present time, the area where the company has to go out and NRC is insisting on having hearings and prolonging the opening of Unit 1? Don't you think the press is sort of forcing this? There are seven other plants in operation with the same type operation as Three Mile Island. So, if those plants are operating, why shouldn't Unit 1 be in operation now?

A We can't tell the Nuclear Regulatory Commission what to do and we never have tried.

Q My question to you is on the Monday morning, and somebody asked me the question, why are they writing these stories about Three Mile Island. Why are they continuing this, you know; it's over there.

A Other things are happening, Mr. O'Brien. You are having the hearings. The Public Utility Commission right at this moment is having an evaluation hearing, right at this

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moment. That's why Mary is not here. The PUC is doing the same thing that you are. Things are happening. Obviously, there is a concern by the General Assembly, by the Congress of the United States, by the people they represent, by the people you represent as to whether nuclear energy is safe and whether, if it is established that it is safe, whether the operations are being conducted properly. I applaud you for having these hearings, the NRC for having hearings. That's the way the process works and that's the way it should work. There are decisions to be made, not by me or by any other news medium, but by the people who are assigned, by virtue of their appointments by the President, the members of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, based on information gathered by them and their staff. They will decide whether this plant will reopen and to what extent it will reopen and then the Public Utility Commission will decide, again, ladies and gentlemen appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate in accord with our constitutional practice, who will pay for it and to what extent it will be paid for and that's the way it should be. The system works.

Q. . . . My final question to you, Saul, and I want you to do me a favor. I would like you, your paper, someone, to interview NRC or DEH, someone to find out is it safer right

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now to make the decision to clean up Three Mile Island or let it lay there and wait four years or five years. I think you have a responsibility to the people. The experts that I have talked to all claim it should be cleaned up; that a political decision is saying no, the people are not right for it, even though it's very dangerous to let it lay there and most experts think it should be cleaned up. So, if you are responsible reporters or you're the boss, I think it's your responsibility to look into something like this and try to get the facts.

A I believe we have reported the fact that they have tapped these buildings and taken samples of the water contained in them. We have also reported the fact that it would take between 2500 and 3,000 round trips to the State or Washington to deposit the nuclear garbage or waste from a nuclear operation. It is not up to us to determine whether the building is to be cleaned up. That is the NRC's, Mr. O'Brien.

Q That's not my point. My point is somebody has to take the decision.

A I agree there, somebody does.

Q Somebody has to make a decision and I think we are dependent on the news media in this and I think this is the role you should play and see if that decision can't be made or what is the decision going to be.

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A I see. If you mean to speed up the process, we'll see what we can.

CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Representative Piccola?

BY REPRESENTATIVE PICCOLA:

Q Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before I ask my question, I would like also to compliment not only the Patriot News but the entire local media for their responsible reporting that occurred during the incident. As an area resident, I relied on the local media for almost exclusive information and I have to say that although we were greatly concerned, I experienced no sense of panic whatsoever until 6:30 when Walter Chronkite pontificated upon the situation here in Harrisburg and I would just like to compliment you, Mr. Koshler, and the entire local media for their responsible behavior.

A Thank you.

Q My question is this. Given your personal opinion, which you have expressed which is presumably the opinion of most of your Editorial Board and it's reflected in your editorials and it's reflected, I think, not in the stories but in the play that the stories are given and also the interest that we have in the local area about the situation; if the NRC determines that Unit 1 and/or Unit 2 will begin to function sometime in the future and, in fact, begins to function sometime in

the future, what do you perceive as the role of the media, particularly in the Central Pennsylvania area?

A To lead this community in prayers that March 28th doesn't happen again. We will accept what the process comes up with. If they say nuclear power is safe and that this installation is to be reopened, so be it; so long as it is done in accordance with the process established by law and, therefore, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission is pursuing that policy or that course now. If they reopen it, fine. It won't affect either you or I because we don't get our electricity from Three Mile Island. We will hope it never happens again.

Q You indicate that you are satisfied with the system that the NRC is responsible for the determination as to whether a plan reopens. Do you have any suggestions or recommendations on changing that system along the lines that would give the state more power than they currently have in the area of perhaps siting and regulating nuclear facilities?

A Only to the extent that the residents of an area within any given radius be given the opportunity to speak on whether they want it there. There are people who say that nuclear power is so safe you could have it anywhere and there are other people who say if that is the case, why did Philadelphia Electric have to get their power from Peach

POOR ORIGINAL

Bottom. Why don't they do it in Rittenhouse Square and they won't have to carry their wires as far as that. I don't know what the answer to that is. My comment to you, Jeff, is that the President appointed the Nuclear Regulatory Commissioners. They were confirmed by the Senate. They have every right to do what they are doing and I think they are doing it properly. I think the same is true for the PJC here. If, in its wisdom, the legislation wishes to take additional safeguards on the shoulders of the state, I would applaud that because if that is what the people of Pennsylvania want that's what they should have. I don't know if you can take anything away from the NRC. I don't think Congress will let you get away with that but I think that you can assume additional responsibility. Maybe you can't do that either. I don't know.

Q Do you think the only significant change that you would make would be the initiation of a referendum in the local county in which such a plant would be erected and you indicated that probably the people of this area would vote to --

A Referendum and a responsible individual on the scene and, I think, even the most ardent pro nuclear power people now say that; that that's true; that there should be somebody there, either from the NRC or from the company who is well acquainted both with nuclear power and communications and

POOR ORIGINAL

that's really not that far apart. Denton is not a newspaper man yet he was able to talk to people. If we had 172 Harold Denton's, one for each plant, things would go easier.

Q Thank you.

CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Representative Klingaman?

BY REPRESENTATIVE KLINGAMAN: ~~Representative Klingaman?~~

Q Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Sir, I presume that my colleagues have been referring to you as Saul simply because they can't pronounce Koehler. Before I wax philosophical, I would like to clarify the point that my colleague, Bernie O'Brien says he only reads your paper occasionally. That is because he can only borrow it occasionally.

A They call me Saul, by the way, because I spent a good part of my adult life in --

Q I thought it was because you are an only son.

A That may very well be.

Q Those things come naturally. I believe rather than a question, what I really think is to secure agreement with a philosophical point of mine and that's on the Bill of Rights and the freedom of press. As I see it, the founding fathers established the Bill of Rights not only to, as you said, to immunize people like you from folks like us but also to immunize folks like us from people like you and the general

POOR ORIGINAL

public generally. The gentleman who testified previously said that credibility was the issue and then he said that the reporters didn't understand the answers early in the incident. Apparently, Met Ed was giving them information but was giving it so technological that neither you nor I nor the reporters understood it; understood the answers and consequently, that's what the gentleman said before, that the reporters, early in the incident, before the thing -- the thing that caused them to dig was that they really didn't understand what Met Ed was telling them. The answers were so technological in nature that the reporters, the regular newspaper reporters, didn't understand nuclear energy to this degree. That wasn't so much a point of credibility as it was a lack of understanding on the part of the man asking the story of what he was being told.

Another thing that you said is get the farther from home you get, the looser you can get with the facts.

A I believe I was paraphrasing Mr. Higgins who said that and I happen to agree with it. I didn't say looser you should get. I said the looser you are able to get away with.

Q So, the other thing, I'm not going to hurry home to see the eleven o'clock news.

A Stay here.

Q I think that the only conclusion that we can come

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to is that the media is not perfect when it gets farther away from home so that just as the Legislature is not perfect, so the news media is not perfect. We are going to have --

A The news media is not perfect, Mr. Klingaman, no way; and the news media here at home is not always perfect either and I'm the first to admit it.

Q Yes. And you are the formulators of public opinion. I was just hoping that all of my colleagues here who conferred upon you those very well deserved accolades on your handling of the crisis here will do the same when it comes around to reporting on the legislative raise.

A We also cover the Legislature.

Q And how we know it.

REPRESENTATIVE O'BRIEN: We know it.

BY REPRESENTATIVE KLINGAMAN:

Q It's a philosophical thing on the Bill of Rights. My conception is that the founding fathers intended them to protect people in general and not a single segment of society whether it be the press; whether it be any particular religion but to protect people in general and it worries me a little bit that there isn't anything that we can do with a Dr. Jekyll. I don't want any of them either. I agree with you there. But it worries me a little that it's accepted. Maybe it's not ac-

POOR ORIGINAL

cepted; decried a little bit, in the industry that the farther away you get from home -- for example, during those days, I was down here and nobody was excited at all. I went home, 75 miles away, and there was panic.

A I would like to comment on one statement you made about the founding fathers and the First Amendment to the Constitution. I'm not an attorney but, I believe, you will find it says, "Congress shall make no law abridging the freedom of the press."

Q Pretty good quote.

A And Congress was forbidden to make any law taking away freedom of the press. Mr. Jefferson put it very succinctly when he said if he had a choice of government without the press and the press without government, he surely would accept the press without government.

Q Jefferson was so brilliant I almost wish he were a Republican.

REPRESENTATIVE O'BRIEN: Another guy.

REPRESENTATIVE KLINGAMAN: Thank you, sir.

CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: You have any additional comments or wrap-up remarks? Representative Foster?

BY REPRESENTATIVE FOSTER:

Q Thank you. I would like to follow up on the point

you made in expressing your opposition to nuclear energy in general and expressly that you felt that the plant sitings should be a matter of the people in the vicinity to decide and my question would be would that -- do you think it should be on -- at what level; borough township, state level, the customer area? How would you arrive at that?

A Whatever a legislative body in its wisdom decided to be a proper radius.

Q I was trying to see what you thought would be the proper radius.

A Whatever the proper radius would be as established by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, perhaps five miles, ten miles, twenty miles.

Q So, in other words, you would essentially leave this decision making process to the NRC?

A Or to the General Assembly.

Q What I'm thinking is that whether it be a nuclear plant; whether it be an oil refinery; a coal fired plant or whatever, if you site it in and given locality, if you make the radius narrow enough, you can guarantee that it will be defeated.

A Sure. You can do that with a playground too, Mr. Foster. There are some people that don't want nursing homes

in their area. This will happen no matter what you do. I think the Mayor of Middletown, Mr. Reed, put it perfectly when he said he may have even said it before this Committee. Give me a good old flood anytime. The water is there and I'm there and I know I'm going to inundated. The problem with this accident in March was that we did not know and perhaps we still don't know. That's my problem. When I turn that light on, I don't know whether it comes from oil or coal or nuclear power. I would like to know that it's reasonably safe and that somebody is looking out for my welfare. Now, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the Department of Environmental Resources, are doing that but if it's going to take four years to clean it up, I agree with you, that needs to be speeded up. On the other hand, they are the guys with the expertise and if it takes that long, that's the way it has to be. It's very possible that you are right; that they should get with it.

REPRESENTATIVE O'BRIEN: You'll find I'm right.

BY REPRESENTATIVE FOSTER:

Q That light you speak of, when it doesn't come on and when that furnace doesn't come on, that produces panic of another sort.

A True.

Q Thank you, Mr. Koehler.

CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Representative Stuban?

BY REPRESENTATIVE STUBAN:

Q Saul, you expressed your opinion here on nuclear power and where you stand. Has this been an opinion that you have formulated since Three Mile Island or did you have this same opinion prior to Three Mile Island?

A I had no real opinion prior to Three Mile Island. My opinion is based solely and, again, it is my own personal opinion, it has no bearing on the newspaper's opinion. My opinion is based solely on the fact that they cannot turn it off. They cannot stop fission. They cannot stop reaction. They cannot stop discharging to the air and if your honorable Legislature and if the honorable courts can't stop them, they will discharge into the river. That's the reason that I worry. I know that you have done something to keep acid mine drainage out of rivers. Now, I think you have to do something to keep nuclear waste out of rivers and if you have to close the plants while you decide that to do, by golly do it.

Q Do you feel that this opinion the general public had prior to Three Mile Island?

A I don't know. I think the general public probably was uninformed, as I was. I used to have a professor in college, a history professor, who used to call us ignorant on the first

day of class. Then, he said, now listen, I didn't say stupid. He said on the last day of class you may be stupid but right now you are ignorant. I, for one, was ignorant. I didn't realize, for example, that while they are generating nuclear power, they are discharging into the atmosphere. I had no way of knowing that before. Now, whether that changes my opinion or not doesn't matter because I am assured by everybody that the levels of discharge are safe, safer than having my teeth x-rayed, for example. What worries me, sir, is that they cannot turn it off.

Q O.K. Another question then. You know you faced here, and I don't want you to misunderstand me because most likely my believe is going along with your belief and your thoughts, but you really didn't formulate an opinion strongly until after Three Mile Island?

(Mr. Koehler indicated in the affirmative.)

Q Would you then say that the utilities had sold the general public a bill of goods that they weren't really telling the truth about?

A I wouldn't go that far, no. No, I wouldn't say that.

Q Well, do you think that they got involved in something they didn't have a lot of knowledge about, the nuclear

industry?

A I think they are several years before their time, yes.

Q To get off of that sub'ect, I'd like to ask you another question and since you are a reporter of the news and everything else, it seems to me that the news media got blamed for a lot of things and we had a lot of problems here and you made a statement that the Emergency Management Act that we have is a good act. We also have, in that Emergency Management Act there is a headquarters that is set up over at the PennDot Building. Do you feel that when this problem arose and we had the disaster at Three Mile Island, if the Governor and everybody else would have moved over to PennDot where they belonged and would have gotten the news releases and informed the people and the press at one central location, we possibly wouldn't have gotten off on the tangent from the start?

A Oh, I'm the last fellow in town to tell the Governor where to go or where to make his headquarters.

CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: You don't write editorials.

MR. KOEHLER: I thought we had been pretty kind to the Governor. The President also has every right to come in here and set up headquarters anytime he wants. I think the presence of one individual who knew what it was all about and

was able to talk about it in a sensible comforting manner changed the entire picture; maybe not in Los Angeles or in Dallas, Texas but certainly those of us around here.

BY REPRESENTATIVE STUBAN:

Q In your opinion, you said that you would not tell the Governor where to go but we do have an Emergency Management Center over there and there is a headquarters over there to house him. Then, you think that we ought to continue in the next disaster the same way we operated in this disaster; let each department go on their own and everybody set up their own damned headquarters?

A Let me shortcircuit you by saying we hope that there are no more disasters. Hopefully there won't be any more and if there is one, I'd like to see the correct information given out immediately so that whether it be in this plant here and we are the local paper or in some plant in California and the Los Angeles Times is the local paper, calmed, measured reporting not directed at panic and not directed solely at selling newspapers will become the way of life. That will be great in all endeavors but in an emergencies like that, it becomes even more important.

Q The only thing I may add -- my district, you know, is right off a nuclear plant that possibly is going to get

fired up in a couple of years and, you know, we are sitting down with the company and they are setting up all kinds of committees on emergency management and everything else and if we don't have a central location with open lines, we can't sure ask the Governor to come to my little corner in Berwick, Pennsylvania. And I think we have to have central headquarters where the central emergency management people will be so we have direct lines of communications to the group that is going to make the decision.

A Except that -- your point may be well taken. I don't know. That is a matter for the Legislature to consider and decide; not for us.

Q That's all. I don't want to put you on the spot by saying where the Governor should sit and where he shouldn't.

CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Saul, you have been a good witness and we thank you very much.

MR. KOEHLER: Thank you for having me, Mr. Chairman

CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: At this point, we will take a ten minute break.

(The hearing recessed at 11:48 p.m. and reconvened at 11:58 p.m.)

CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Mr. Sheldon Parker and Mr. Larry

J. Messinger. Will you raise your right hands, please?

SHELDON PARKER and LARRY J. MESSINGER, called as witnesses, were duly sworn by Chairman Wright and testified as follows:

CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Shel, I assume you have a statement you would like to lead off with?

MR. PARKER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and good morning. It's a pleasure to be with you although I know from firsthand experience, even greater pleasure is found sitting on the other side of this table. Since I anticipate maybe a question or two when we are finished and since some of you, with whom I have had the pleasure of working in the past, know I have trouble changing a light bulb or turning off a light switch, I brought a veteran professional of public television with me.

Larry Messinger is the Director of Technical Operators with the Pennsylvania Public Television Network and has excelled in that position for ten years. Previous to coming to Hershey to put PPTN on the air, Larry was Chief Engineer at WHYI, Channel 12, in Philadelphia.

During the ten days of TMI, Larry worked day and night primarily coordinating the distribution of broadcast programming and advising on technical matters for both commercial and non-

commercial broadcasting.

Now, PPTN is a network commission, an independent commission, created by Act 329 of the General Assembly of 1968. As a part of its duties, it operates a television distribution system which interconnects the eight public television stations in Pennsylvania through the PPTN operations center in Hershey. Under the Commonwealth Disaster Operations Plan, PPTN is charged with the responsibility to broadcast instructions and information as directed by the Emergency Management Agency and to broadcast information as requested by other Commonwealth agencies.

Throughout its short history, PPTN has actively and aggressively pursued its duty of supply information to the public. During the Harrisburg floods of 1972 and 1974, and the flooding caused by Hurricane Eloise in 1975, we provided information dealing with immediate relief and recovery. We continued this tradition of service during the incident at Three Mile Island.

We note that, despite the many emergency communications systems available to the Commonwealth, the Commonwealth, we feel, made the wise decision of utilizing all media, including public and commercial radio and television and the press, for the dissemination of instructions and information to the public.

We believe this decision was correct because it contributed to the maintenance of helping to clam a concerned population. We believe the response of the Pennsylvania media during the crisis was outstanding and are proud of the role assumed by PPTN and its member stations.

During TMI, PPTN responded to requests by the Governor, the Lt. Governor and other responsible high state officials to provide distribution services for official announcements and information. In addition, PPTN and its member stations developed and distributed other information services including the broadcast of NRC announcements, press conferences, and informative interviews and statements of responsible experts and officials. Included with your copy of these remarks are Exhibits A and B which detail the programming carried by PPTN and its member stations. All PPTN services were made available not only to PPTN member stations, but to all stations in the Commonwealth, both radio and television, as well as to our counterpart organizations nationally and internationally.

PPTN is unique in that it operates the only television distribution system which affords instantaneous access to the entire state and can provide that access from any of seven regional points in the Commonwealth. In times of

public concern, PPTN, as an ongoing policy, offers appropriate programming to all Pennsylvania broadcast stations, either through arrangements directly with PPTN or through cooperative agreements between individual public television stations and their local commercial colleagues. One such cooperative arrangement was that with WITF, one of our fine PPTN member stations, and we are going to hear shortly from Mike Ziegler who is the Executive Vice President of that station, who will talk more about the way we instigated with the Harrisburg area stations.

PPTN has a comprehensive operational disaster plan of many years standing. The plan covers a wide variety of circumstances ranging from a partial loss of the interconnection system to the partial or complete destruction of the operating center or a member station. We must admit, however, that before March 29 we did not envision the possibility of a mass evacuation of a large area of the state. Even though there was not a contingency evacuation plan on hand, one was developed and hardware modifications made to assure the continuing flow of information to Pennsylvania's citizens wherever their new, temporary homes may have been. The contingency plan covers a variety of evacuation circumstances including the area to be cleared, the vicinity of dispersment, the continuation or

loss of utility services in critical areas, and maintaining contact with news sources. The plan contemplates rapid establishment of auxiliary network control and sub-control points, and the utilization of a broad selection of technologies ranging from two-way radio and the ordinary telephone, through conventional terrestrial distribution systems, to the use of communications satellites.

We believe that the information services to the public, provided by PPTN and other media representatives, were excellent. We do, however, feel that there are situations which hampered our efforts and those of others to provide that service. To improve the flow of news in the event of a circumstance of similar consequence, whether here or in another part of the state, we hope that you feel the following suggestions are worthy of your attention:

First, we recommend the establishment or designation of an agency which can provide advice to those entities offering official information regarding the most efficient means of distribution. For example, during the TMI crisis, PPTN would have carried NRC briefings live, as it did those of the Governor, if it had been possible to do so. However, the site selected for those briefings, the Middletown Boro Hall, had no access to television facilities. Thus, while there was extensive live

radio coverage, television coverage, even during the first crucial days, was significantly delayed to allow recordings to be rushed to the nearest transmission point and assembled for broadcast. Simply by moving the site selected for the briefing less than ten miles, for example, to the Capitol or to the Hershey Theater, immediate live coverage would have been possible. We have no desire to minimize the very important role which was played by radio during TMI, but we must bear in mind that, in instances where official emergency procedures have not been effected, a significant portion of the population will continue to look to television as their news medium.

Second, we recommend the establishment or designation of an agency to identify and coordinate the use of available transmission facilities. Television transmission facilities are limited throughout the Commonwealth, both in location and in the number of facilities existing. During the TMI crisis, despite the addition of temporary facilities by Pennsylvania Bell and AT&T, stations were forced to share facilities. This sharing was accomplished through a cooperative effort by Bell, AT&T, and the sharing stations. Often these sharing agreements were immediate and ad hoc. Often the agreements included the sharing of program material as well as facilities. However, despite the commendable and extraordinary

effort of Bell and AT&T, and despite the high degree of cooperation between users, arrangements were frequently time consuming and sometimes less than satisfactory. An entity, knowledgeable of existing facilities, alternate facilities, and the routing structure, could provide the ability to aggregate user needs and coordinate those needs with facility providers.

Third, we recommend the installation of a permanent television transmission facility from the Capitol complex, the Main Capitol, PMEA Headquarters, or both, to the PPTN operating center. As we have noted previously, PPTN is the only statewide transmission system capable of providing immediate statewide broadcast access; but, in order to afford this access at the present time, programs must originate from a station which is part of the PPTN system. Origination from locations other than station studios must undergo a complex and time consuming routing, usually provided by Pennsylvania Bell and AT&T, before reaching a point where it may enter the PPTN system. For example, the Governor's briefing of March 30 on the subject of evacuation plans was routed from the Capitol to Bell, Harrisburg; then to AT&T, Harrisburg; from there to AT&T, Pittsburgh; to Bell, Pittsburgh; and finally to WQED, Pittsburgh, where it could enter the PPTN system. Approximately

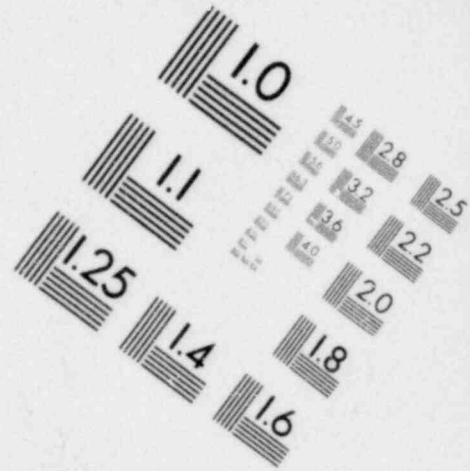
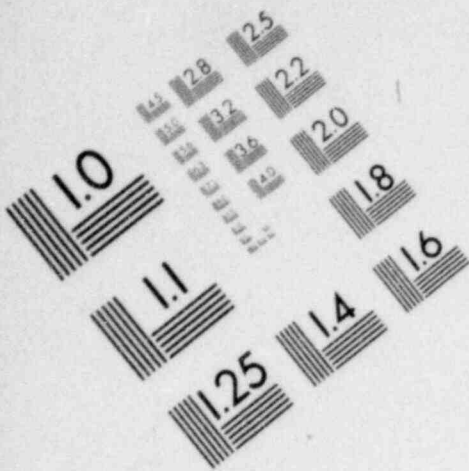
one and one-half hours notice of the briefing was simply insufficient to allow time for the establishment of the picture circuits. The major portion of that live briefing was sound only. A permanent facility, linking the Capitol and PPTN, would circumvent this complexity. Since PPTN bases a camera unit in the Capitol, immediate access to the statewide distribution network would be possible if a properly maintained facility were present. The cooperative agreements between stations which we discussed earlier would then allow full public and commercial broadcast throughout the state.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we are grateful for having had the opportunity to appear before you to express our views. Many of us at PPTN are residents in the Harrisburg area or the radius and know firsthand the concerns of that traumatic time; we applaud and support your efforts to provide safeguards against future crises and offer our continued assistance. We will be happy to receive your questions, and specifically Larry Messinger.

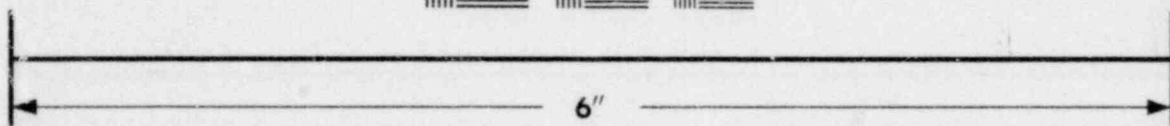
CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Larry, do you want to make a comment at this point?

MR. MESSINGER: No, sir, but I will be happy to answer any questions.

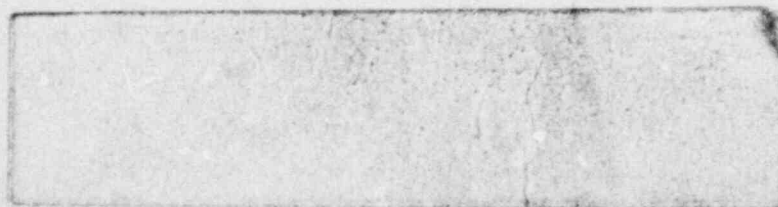
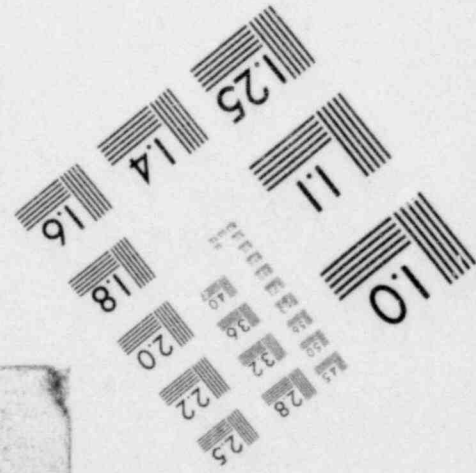
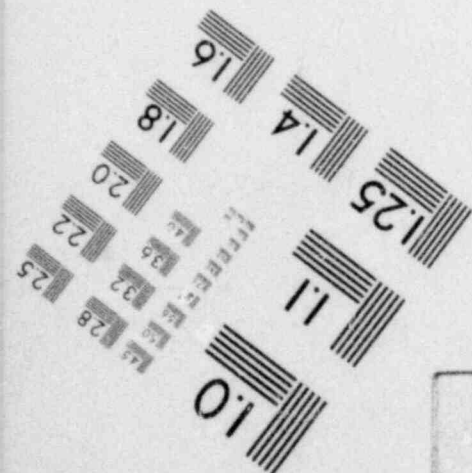
BY CHAIRMAN WRIGHT:



**IMAGE EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (MT-3)**



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART



Q In a more facetious mood, Shelly, I think you are making a pitch for some money.

A Mr. Chairman, this isn't the Appropriations Committee.

Q I was just going to remind you of that. One of the problems that you comment on concerns the location of the debriefings and the news conferences at Middletown rather than a facility where you had better connections. Who made that decision and why was that decision made; do you know?

BY MR. MESSINGER:

A I'm afraid I just don't have that information, Mr. Chairman. The decision was made and the conferences were announced. I say the decisions were made and the conferences were announced and I assume it was made by the NRC but that is simply an assumption on my part.

Q I thought I noted, in watching some of the commercial stations, background that indicated they were using offices in the basement here at the Capitol and I assume that some of those broadcasts were live. Did they channel them through your facilities in the basement?

A To a large extent, yes. There were other facilities here as well. On the Friday, the 30th, I believe, we had the only facility and, of course, we opened it up to as

many people as we possibly could. On Saturday, Bell Telephone and AT&T began moving more equipment into the Capitol Building and I think we were able to increase the number of lines out of the Capitol from one to four by Sunday, at least. We still had sharing agreements working after that time. There were many more before, news agencies here.

Q I assume the form of those sharing agreements was informal. It wasn't a legal written document?

A . . . legal documents at that point. The bill, of course, was handled by Bell for those facilities and they kept a record of who used them when and billed them according to that principle.

Q I assume when you shared with commercial stations --

A Oh, yes.

Q There was some cost involved on your part?

There were costs only for our own services. If we used a line from one o'clock to two o'clock, we would pay for that period. If a commercial station would use that same line from two o'clock to three o'clock, they would pay for that period.

Q Who did the bookkeeping and made the determinations?

A Bell Telephone kept a record of who was using them.

Q Questions? Fred?

BY MR. TAYLOR:

Q Yes. In your statement, Mr. Parker, you said that PPTN is the officially authorized TV network for emergency broadcasting and I don't understand exactly -- is that similar to what we have when you hear the radio every so often, they go off testing the national broadcasting emergency system, response system; is it similar to that?

BY MR. MESSINGER:

A No, not the same. The Commonwealth maintains a comprehensive disaster plan with all of the Commonwealth operations. Under the plan, PPTN is assigned responsibility as Mr. Parker mentioned in his statement for the broadcast of information and instructions developed by FMEA and broadcast information is requested by other state departments.

Q I see. But it's not --

A This is not an emergency plan.

Q That's what I wanted to know. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Bob Hollis?

BY MR. HOLLIS:

Q My question concerns the statement to hook up a permanent TV network within the Capitol be it where it may. Isn't there some talk of your moving from Hershey into the

Harrisburg area? Is this true, false, indifferent, about trying to get some space within either the Strawberry Square or something? Somebody is promoting something at PPTN or TV 33 -- somebody was going to come into the area?

BY MR. PARKER:

A Mr. Ziegler will be able to do justice to that question but it's my understanding that Channel 33 and WITF is looking at various sites. I'm not aware of any site though within the Capitol complex. I think the closest would be some distance from the Capitol complex.

Q The reason I made that comment was that in your plan to provide for permanent communication or television lines or whatever it may be, they would have to run from here to Hershey where the line would have to run -- and have they come up with a cost estimate to run permanent facilities in? That's basically my question.

BY MR. MESSINGER:

Q The line would run from the Capitol, as we suggested, from the Capitol complex to the operating center in Hershey. They are trying to estimate a cost on that or trying to estimate a cost on that without doing an engineering study is rather risky business but I will go out on the limb to the extent of approximately \$35,000.

Q \$35,000, you say?

A That would be permanent transmission facilities, not with cameras or any of the other pick-up devices but simply the ability to come from this building to the network operating center and have a signal received.

Q Basically without the cameras but the line is the major expenditure, we are talking about \$35,000?

A We have also gotten a cost on that, using a common carrier facility, of approximately \$1500 a month. We have a choice in routes to go. As I said, it's a dangerous thing to say without having done a study.

Q No. I was just wondering whether the cost would be exorbitant or minimal. I see it's minimal.

REPRESENTATIVE O'BRIEN: Jim, I have no questions but I just want to make a statement that an awful lot of public television, I think they do a tremendous job and with Sheldon Parker, I wish he were a Democrat.

MR. PARKER: I had to shed my party label.

REPRESENTATIVE KLINGAMAN: The score is one to one.

CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Jeff Piccola?

BY REPRESENTATIVE PICCOLA:

Q Yes. I must apologize. I don't get to watch much television at all, let alone public television.

CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: That's the best.

BY REPRESENTATIVE PICCOLA:

Q I did participate in a program sometime after the accident which sort of brought together a lot of individuals and, I guess, I participated as a member of this Committee, who had some knowledge and input into what we were doing as far as follow-up. Could you tell me what kinds of programs are being sponsored by your network that would educate the public that would be related specifically to Three Mile Island and nuclear energy or the energy situation in general and how many of these have been prompted by the incident at Three Mile Island?

BY MR. PARKER:

A Mr. Representative, if you don't mind, with Mr. Ziegler coming on next, I think he can add a lot of life to what is a very dull listing of programs and I think without any question WITF, the Harrisburg-Hershey station, did the most comprehensive job and since Mike has the responsibility for overseeing programming at 33, I think he can be much more responsive and helpful to you.

Q This is the responsibility for each station?

A That's right.

Q Not the network as a whole?

A That's right, yes.

CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: I guess that's it. I'd love to ask some questions about the channel that is more accessible to me, Channel 53 out of Trenton, New Jersey.

MR. PARKER: That's New Jersey Public Television.

CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: That's the one that is more accessible to where I live.

MR. PARKER: That's unfortunate.

CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Thanks a lot.

MR. PARKER: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Our next witness is Mr. Michael Ziegler, Executive Vice President of Channel 33. Would you raise your right hand, sir?

MICHAEL J. ZIEGLER, called as a witness, being duly sworn by Chairman Wright, testified as follows:

CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: We'd appreciate it if you have opening remarks.

MR. ZIEGLER: I have some informal opening remarks and I'd be glad to respond to questions. I'll also, in my opening remarks, attempt to answer a few of the questions Mr. Parker alluded to.

WITF is the independent public television station serving southcentral Pennsylvania including the entire 20-mile

radius of the area affected by TMI. WITF participated with Pennsylvania's other six public TV stations -- participates in the operation of PPTN and cooperates fully with PPTN.

However, I must point out that WITF is independent of PPTN.

In responding to the specific question about the relocation; in fact, WITF has engaged in talks of a relocation to Harrisburg and a change of city license from Hershey to Harrisburg. The primary site being considered in Harrisburg is on the campus of Harrisburg Area Community College. However, it is WITF's plan at some point in the near future to establish a Harrisburg office and establish a microwave link from that office and a small production facility to our studios wherever they may be. In fact, the site at Strawberry Square has been mentioned. We had, six months or so ago, some informal conversations about the possibility of leasing a small office in that complex for the purposes of this. In fact, this would be for WITF's local program operation. It would, of course, be available to PPTN if any sharing would be contemplated or be desirable.

As we did, as WITF did, during the two floods which devastated parts of our service area in the past, when the crisis occurred at Three Mile Island, we assessed how WITF could provide a service to the area. We felt we

could count on the commercial radio and TV stations and the local and national press to cover the hard news of the event. We, therefore, felt our role should be a three-fold one.

First, to provide a forum and a means of communication to the area and through PPTN into the Commonwealth for various national and state officials.

Secondly, we felt we should provide a means for analysis and background information. This, considering the fact that we felt confident that the hard news of the event would be fully covered.

Thirdly, we felt that we should make a commitment to continue coverage with retrospective materials through the months and even years following the incident. In other words, we were determined not to let it vanish from our attention and not to move on to other events and have people say whatever happened. Not that we figured that that would happen but we made a commitment to continue our coverage.

Consistent with those goals, we mounted an immediate effort involving our entire local production capability of six producers or writers and three full location videotape teams to gather material. At the same time, we operated our facilities through the PPTN supported Capitol news team and through PPTN made state officials aware of the availability of

our facilities for origination purposes or for other official communications, our facilities in Hershey.

What grew from that commitment was a roster of programs and, with your indulgence and just about a minute, I'd like to review the programs that we, in fact, produced during that time. On Thursday, March 29th, the day after the event, the regular edition of our weekly news magazine program, 360, made brief mention of the incident and outlined some of the questions that were in people's minds at that point and promised a full report the following week. Also on that same Thursday night, the day after the accident, WITF interconnected with the McNeil-Lehr (phonetic) Report of PBS for a live broadcast which originated in part in Hershey, and at 11 p.m. that same Thursday evening, originated a live program which was fed by PBS to more than 200 public television stations throughout the country entitled, "The Mishap at Three Mile Island: An Update." This program was hosted by WITF's John Baer (phonetic) and featured the Governor and provided several field reports from WITF producers who had been hard at work that day taping pieces on location in the field.

On Friday, the 30th, we provided the McNeil-Lehr Report with a short segment which they used in the program and on Tuesday, we produced a live episode of our regularly

scheduled series, Newsmakers, hosted by John Baer, and fed that program to PBS who in turn distributed it to the 200 or more stations. This program featured an analysis by a group of reporters of the events up to that point.

On Thursday, April 5th, we produced a special statewide edition of our weekly news magazine, 360. It dealt exclusively with Three Mile Island from a variety of perspectives and included six reports.

On Tuesday, April 10th, we produced another Newsmaker program, this one dealing with the fiscal aftermath of Three Mile Island. It was offered statewide through PPTN and used by some of the other PPTN affiliated stations.

On Thursday, April 12th, with the incident still very much in the news, our regularly scheduled episode of 360 contained a follow-up report on the incident.

All of these productions were funded by WITF or by PBS sources. Excerpts from these programs were also distributed to other PBS stations for their use in local programs and WITF cooperated with PPTN in meeting technical requirements of the network and participated fully in the activities that resulted from the need to distribute program materials.

As the days passed and the weekend following the accident approached, WITF began a series of conversations

Concerning our role as broadcasters as opposed to program producers if an evacuation was ordered. WITF's Director of Engineer, John Bosack (phonetic), suggested using PPTN facilities to relocate our Hershey operation to State College, Pennsylvania, hopefully well outside the potentially affected area of the evacuation.

On Sunday afternoon, I contacted individually the General Managers or their representatives of each of south-central Pennsylvania's commercial television station, asking each of them whether they would participate in devising a joint plan of operation if an evacuation would be ordered. For the record, the people who participated in devising that plan were Joe Higgins of WHP, David Dodds of WLYH TV, Paul Abbott of WTPA, Nelson Sears of WGAL and Bob Stough of WSBA in York. All of those stations would have been critically affected should an evacuation had been ordered. All agreed and in conference calls Sunday afternoon and again on Monday, the plan was jointly agreed upon. In a nearly unprecedented action by the Federal Communications Commission, permission was granted on a Sunday afternoon for all of the many pieces of regulated activity needed by the plan to take place. Most of those activities, under normal conditions, being highly illegal and the FCC responded on a Sunday afternoon, much to

the amazement of all of us. It restored our faith as broadcasters in the ability of the regulatory agencies to respond if the need for response was really there.

Rather than going into great detail about the plan, I would like to quote from an article which appeared in "Broadcasting Magazine" on April 23rd, 1979. Broadcasting Magazine is widely read and is considered to be the trade journal of the broadcasting industry. The article is entitled "The Ultimate in Remote Control." And I quote, "Had broadcasters been forced to evacuate the Harrisburg, PA area during the Three Mile Island nuclear crisis, local service would have been continued by remote control under a contingency plan spearheaded by non-commercial WITF TV, Hershey, PA. Local broadcasters were prepared to originate from the facilities of another member of the Pennsylvania Public Television Network, WPFX TV, State College, Pennsylvania, some 90 miles from the nuclear reactor. Key to the joint effort by public and commercial stations would have been the microwave interconnection among Pennsylvania Public Television Network stations. The microwave would have allowed WITF to have been operated by remote control by WPFX TV patching the stations together. In addition to the local reports by WPFX TV, the public broadcasting service, PBS, would also be brought in as usually by satellite. It was also

expected that arrangements would be made to bring in commercial network reports. Once transmitted to WITF TV via the microwave network, the commercial stations would have adjusted their transmitters to pick up and rebroadcast, if they wished, the WITF signal. Aside from WITF TV, the other Pennsylvania stations participating in the plan were WSBA, York; WTPA and WHP TV, both in Harrisburg, WCAL TV and WLYE TV both in Lancaster. Each station was to be represented on a Programming Committee headed by WITF. Local news reports would have been pooled and other material cherry-picked from national services. Reporters from the participating stations would all have shown up on the air. The idea was to reassure viewers by using news people station's audiences normally turn to. Expressing the feelings of all of the stations involved, including WLYE TV, Lancaster, was George A. Kohler (phonetic), President of Gateway Communications Incorporated in a letter to FCC Chairman, Charles P. Ferris. Mr. Kohler called the plan, 'A unique, in the literal sense of the word, sample of cooperation.' He said that, 'I think the Commission should be aware of the public minded independent actions of all of the stations involved.' And after explaining the contingency plan, he concluded, 'I have only a secondary interest and a subjective one in the action. As a broadcaster in the business

for 34 years, I am impressed by what the broadcasters can do will to do in emergencies for the benefit of the public.'" That quote from Broadcasting Magazine.

In exercising our third level of activity, we have continued to report indepth on the subsequent events of the accident; most recently, full coverage on both our radio and television stations of Penn State University's conference on radiation and health held in Hershey last week.

Finally, on Sunday, October 28th, at 10 p.m. the more than 200 stations affiliated with PBS throughout the country will broadcast a special WITF TV production produced and written by WITF's John Baer, in production since the accident, entitled, "The People of Three Mile Island." I invite your viewing to that program and your questions.

CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: I had a question but you answered it.

MR. ZIEGLER: Thank you.

BY CHAIRMAN WRIGHT:

Q Logistically though, assuming that all of the stations are out in the greater Harrisburg area and you were the only one in existence in Hershey and you had to be the focal point for public television and for commercial television, what logistical problems would you have?

A We set up a detailed scheme to evacuate personnel with maps, meeting points, all that sort of thing. The people at Penn State arranged for dormitory rooms, for food service, set aside university rooms for work rooms, this sort of thing. We also contacted Colonel Henderson's office to make sure that any activity we took would not be inconsistent with activities that he may be aware that was being planned at the state level or otherwise. Basically, we would have pushed the button that connects the WITF transmitter in Blue Mountain just above Harrisburg directly to the PPTN line. That in turn would be patched through from PPTN in Hershey to State College and locked the door. And the question -- someone at the FCC asked, well, if your transmitter started acting up and it was in the evacuated area, how would you turn it off to avoid interference to other critical services and someone else suggested calling the National Guard in and, in fact, someone in Washington did do that to find out whether the station's transmitter could be destroyed without anyone having to go into an evacuated area. That's the point at which we were laughing at ourselves. But I suppose one could consider that part of the logistics of the whole scheme.

CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Questions? Representative Klingaman?

BY REPRESENTATIVE KLINGAMAN:

Q Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Sir, you mentioned there a couple of quotes, I wrote down. One time you said the news would be cherry-picked from national?

A Yes.

Q I assume commercial news broadcasts is on commercial stations?

A Yes. That would be the purpose of the Programming Committee.

Q You said that you have continued to report on the incident at Three Mile Island; that perhaps the clean-up possibilities and so on. How do you -- you don't have a six o'clock and eleven o'clock news and so on, do you?

A That's correct, we do not.

Q You do not. You don't have a news team, do you?

A Yes, we do. We have a team of experienced mostly in the print medium, journalists working to produce several weekly indepth programs, analysis, background pieces. These programs are broadcast each week by WITF TV and WITF FM. Our intention, as funding allows, is to increase those programs to the point where we have eventually a daily presence. I would compare our coverage in the same way that you might compare the McNeil-Lehr Report to CBS Evening News.

Q Even that is almost analytical rather than three people were killed today in an automobile accident on 81, that sort of thing.

A Yes.

Q What was really going through my mind here is we are all aware that in the electronic media, medias, the news is their selling point, right?

(Mr. Ziegler indicated in the affirmative.)

Q In fact, I know a broadcaster who used to say of the press; in fact, he said of his own electronic media, "Tomorrow's news today."

A Yes.

Q How can you be sure then that you're not picking up some of the inaccuracies that might be transmitted? We just established here today that locally people do a pretty good job and the further you get away from home, you find the less careful they are. How can you be sure that you're not, because of the immediacy of your media, how can you be sure that you're not helping to add to the panic, for example?

A I don't believe that anyone in the business of covering or reporting the news can ever be completely sure that they are not picking up and passing along something that is less than completely true. However, in our case, we feel

that we have the luxury of time. The lack of daily deadlines, pressure, experienced by our writers and producers allows them somewhat more latitude to check on sources, to seek corroborating evidence, to work on a story a bit longer and this produces material that is more of a background nature. It also allows us to be a bit more careful. This is not said to imply that others aren't equally careful. It's simply that they are working on different tasks and the deadline pressure of cranking out something for a show at six o'clock is extremely tough. I worked in that area and I know how extreme that can be. I know the stories that never show up because they can't be corroborated but are later demonstrated to be true. Now, hopefully, we have, as WITF, the time to allow that span of time to pass to find out whether that story that can't be corroborated turns out to be true and at that point, we can report it.

Q One other question came to mind. You were talking about evacuation.

A Yes.

Q Hershey obvious, I know geography that well, is east of the Susquehanna.

A Yes.

Q We said at one point here there may have been a

plan that everybody west of the Susquehanna go north, everybody east of the Susquehanna go south. You're talking, being east of the Susquehanna, going in the other direction. Earlier in these hearings when we were concerned about evacuation, it was entering in my mind that we should maybe have some sort of regional set up so that there was coordination between the people planning evacuations. Were you any part of any such area plan?

A No.

Q See, this is my concern.

A No, we were not.

Q If we are going to worry about evacuation, we should have some sort of plan or forget evacuation completely.

A At the point that we had to put together our plan, we were limited in a number of ways. State College was the only station we could have worked with. However, we had no way of knowing whether our people could get there because we didn't know what roads would be in what direction. We didn't know whether they could get through. So, we planned to send -- we had volunteers who were prepared to try to make it to State College, despite what the evacuation plans might later develop to be and we tried to get twice as many people as we thought we might need in State College and hope that enough of them would

get through but we didn't know the plan. You are absolutely right. This is of great concern to us.

Q This is what disturbs me in this whole area of evacuation because somebody may live in a certain area that is supposed to go north but mom and pop live to the south and they are going to go to the south. We talked here yesterday of evacuating hospitals and nursing homes. It's beginning to become, Mr. Chairman, mind boggling to me whether we should even worry that much about evacuation because it almost seems impossible to get something coordinated, especially in a catastrophe for which we have no warning. We know that a hurricane is coming. We have warning of a flood. We don't get any warning of an earthquake or a nuclear accident and it seems, of course, here we are concerned about nuclear accidents but it worries me, this whole business of evacuation; whether it could be done even if we wanted to do it and you just brought it to my mind when you said we were going to go to State College but yet you weren't coordinated with anybody as to whether you were supposed to go to State College or go -- the lack of coordination here in evacuation disturbs me.

A It was my understanding on that weekend, as we were thinking about the prospect of evacuation, that there were an awful lot of other people sitting around thinking about it

too and we had no way to be in touch with them, nor they with us. We felt, given what we perceived as our obligation, to work at providing maintenance of service, we felt particularly frustrated and particularly troubled by this problem.

Q Getting back to your news connection, you have no -- PPTM has no regular news gathering service. You have more or less writers who analyze what has happened. Is that the idea?

A Well, we should not confuse WITF's production efforts with these production efforts supported by PPTM. There is, as you are aware, the News Bureau that covers Capitol events and contributes to the production of a weekly program broadcast by all of the PPTM stations. WITF is separate from that in that we have our own teams. We do our own reporting. We can certainly cooperate. There is more news than one team can cover. Occasionally, we find each other in each other's tracks but not very often.

Q I was just centering my thoughts on the possible accuracy of immediate reporting. That's all I have, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Thank you, Mr. Ziegler. It's a pleasure having you with us. As I look at the clock, it's now 20 minutes to one and we had informed our next witness, Mr.

Paul Critchlow, that he wouldn't be on until 1:45, two o'clock. Our attendance has dropped off and if you don't strongly object, I would like to cancel Mr. Critchlow for this afternoon and reschedule him presumably for October 4th. But before I close this meeting, you know, we have noted that both Mary Bradley and Carmen Bruno have been in attendance at everyone of our meetings. We wonder, and this is whether you would like to participate; do you have any criticisms, and comments, any problems that you might like to point out to us?

MR. BRUNO: You skip lunch for one thing.

CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Would you prefer not to participate?

MR. BRUNO: I don't think so. You mean on the work of the Committee or the coverage?


CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Anything that you might -- any comments you might want to make.

MR. BRUNO: I don't think so.

CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: O.K. Thank you very much. At this point, I will adjourn the meeting and we will send you a notice when our wrap-up meeting is. Thank you.

(The hearing terminated at 12:40 p.m.)

I hereby certify that the proceedings and evidence taken by me before the Pennsylvania House of Representative, House Select Committee - Three Mile Island, are fully and accurately indicated in my notes and that this is a true and correct transcript of same.



Nancy J. Adelman, RPR/na