

March 12, 1980

Mr. John F. Ahearne, Chairman
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
1717 H Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20006

Dear Chairman Ahearne:

Thank you very much for taking the time to see us on February 25, 1980, and listening to our concerns about the progress of the NRC's Proposed Policy and Procedures For Differing Professional Opinions (NUREG-0567). We were gratified that you were so clearly on top of the developments in this area and that you shared our concerns. Nevertheless, we thought it might be useful to restate them here.

First, we strongly urge you and the Commission to take the policy and procedures off the drawing board and put them into place as soon as possible. A pioneering effort of this sort, in a difficult area of personnel and professional policy, can never be perfected in the abstract; it will take time and experience (and considerable flexibility in modifications) to make the policy and procedures work. The sooner that process begins, the better off both the NRC and the public will be.

Second, the timing of implementation now bears critically on the credibility of the policies and procedures to NRC employees. As you know, they have seen a succession of announcements, office letters, speeches, drafts and redrafts of comments and proposals for differing professional opinions, and must be forgiven for taking a skeptical attitude towards real reform in this area. In this regard, we urge you and the Commission again to consider appointing a special review board consisting of NRC management, non-management employees and neutral but interested outsiders, to help oversee the implementation and inevitable modification of the policies and procedures over the next year. Such a group would not be chartered to

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conduct a "who struck John" inquiry; but they would lend very considerable credibility to the prospective implementation of these policies and procedures. Moreover, such a group could be instituted immediately as a sign of real progress to the employees, and could help speed up the promulgation of the policy and procedures.

We hope you will take our strongly-urged suggestions to heart. We are confident that they represent the views of many more interested people than just ourselves, although we do not purport formally to speak for the AAAS Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility or any other group by this letter.

Thanks again for giving us your time and attention.

Sincerely yours,

Frank von Hippel

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Peter Raven-Hansen

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