

TERA

JUL 25 1980

Ms. Nancy B. Wenger
522 Antoine Street
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17102

Dear Ms. Wenger:

I am writing in response to your letter to Mr. Harold Denton regarding the Three Mile Island plant. I regret that this answer to your letter has been delayed for so long. The accident and its consequences have created a substantial increase in the agency's workload, which has prevented me from responding to you as promptly as I would have liked.

With regard to your concern about the Price-Anderson Act, this Act does not protect "TMI or any other nuclear power plant from taking responsibility for damages they may...inflict upon people." The following overview of the Price-Anderson Act appeared in the Federal Register on July 23, 1979:

The NRC is constrained by the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 as amended, of which the Price-Anderson Act is a part. The Act has been ruled constitutional in a court case. Any future changes to this statute will require action by the U.S. Congress.

The NRC, in discharging its responsibility under the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 and the mandate of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, conducts, as part of the licensing process, comprehensive safety and environmental reviews of each nuclear power plant prior to issuance of an operating license. The purpose of this detailed review is to assure that the proposed facilities can be built and operated safely without undue risk to the health and safety of the public. No operating license can be issued until this review is satisfactorily completed.

The goal of the U.S. Nuclear Waste Management Program is to provide assurance that existing and future nuclear waste from military and civilian activities, including spent fuel from the once-through nuclear power cycle, can be isolated from the biosphere so as to pose no significant threat to public health and safety and the environment. The NRC is responsible for providing the framework of criteria and regulations that will ensure that the disposal methods developed for all types of radioactive waste are consistent with the achievement of this goal of safe, long-term waste disposal.

The NRC's authority to license and regulate the storage and disposal of radioactive wastes is derived from three statutes: the Atomic Energy Act of 1954,

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the Energy Reorganization Act of 1974, and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. To implement this authority and to provide guidance to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), the industry, and the public, the NRC is developing new or revised regulations for such storage and disposal. These regulations will require conformance with a fixed set of minimally acceptable performance standards for waste management activities while providing for flexibility in the technological approach.

The DOE's responsibilities concerning radioactive waste disposal are limited to high-level wastes and only those low-level wastes produced as part of DOE's programs. Their responsibility does not include commercially generated low-level wastes.

To respond to your concerns about milk and food contamination from the accident at Three Mile Island, the preliminary findings on the health effects of the radioactive materials released are contained in the interagency task force report, "Population Dose and Health Impact of the Accident at the Three Mile Island Nuclear Station" (NUREG-0558), a summary of which is enclosed. The radioactive materials that were released were primarily radioactive gases. The radioactivity was almost entirely from xenon, which is a chemically inactive gas. As the gases leaked out, the winds diluted them. To determine whether food grown in the area will be contaminated, the DOE measured the amounts of radioactivity present in the samples of soil, water, air, and vegetation.

Based on these samples and other information, it was concluded that the principal isotopes in the escaped gases were xenon-133 and xenon-135. Although radioactive iodine was found in samples of some milk, the concentration was less than 1% of the concentration permitted by NRC regulations. Other food samples were tested by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, and none of the 377 food samples tested contained reactor-produced radioactivity.

The small dose of radiation that people in the area received came from radioactive gases that escaped from the auxiliary building. The average dose of radioactivity the population within 50 miles of TMI received was approximately 4 millirems. The maximum exposure to any individual was less than 100 millirems, which is less than the yearly dose each person receives as a result of natural background radiation. Doses at these levels result in less than one health effect over the lifetime of all people in this area. Natural background radiation people in the Harrisburg area receive is approximately 125 millirems per year. To put these doses into perspective, note that a traveler flying round trip by jet from New York to Los Angeles receives 5 millirems of cosmic rays.

Metropolitan Edison (Met Ed) customers will not have to pay for any damages to or for the restoration of Three Mile Island Unit 2. The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PUC), in a decision and order of June 15, 1979, ruled that customers of Met Ed and the Pennsylvania Electric Company would be free from

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accident expenses. These customers will, however, be responsible for costs associated with purchasing power to replace power that the TMI facility would have provided. The Pennsylvania PUC reaffirmed this decision in an order of May 23, 1980.

In the same order, it also ruled that Three Mile Island Unit 1 be removed from the Met Ed and Pennsylvania Electric Company rate bases. As a result, their customers will be free of all maintenance, interest, and capital cost expenses associated with Unit 1. Should Unit 1 be returned to service, costs associated with its operation would, of course, become part of the rate structure.

While we are, of course, concerned about financial impacts on consumers, the NRC's primary responsibility is the assurance of public health and safety. State public utility commissions and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission have primary responsibility regarding the rates that consumers pay for electricity. They should be able to provide information for your use.

With respect to alternative methods of energy production, such as solar, wind, and geothermal, the Department of Energy is the federal agency responsible for their research and development. NRC considers these alternative methods of energy production in its assessment of the environmental impact of each nuclear power plant as part of the agency's overall review of each utility's application for a construction permit or operating license. To date, we have determined that alternative methods of energy production are neither technically nor economically feasible to provide the required amount of power at the time it is needed.

To respond to your request to "open up the top-secret files and educate the citizens about the dangers that are lurking in their back yards" and to "show us the proof," all pertinent information on nuclear power safety is available for the public in the Nuclear Regulatory Commission Public Document Room, 1717 H Street, Northwest, Washington, D.C. 20555. In addition, information particular to the Three Mile Island plant is available in the Government Publications Section, State Library of Pennsylvania, Education Building, Commonwealth and Walnut, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17126.

You comment that NRC should phase out nuclear power plants. NRC's primary responsibility consists in the licensing, inspection, and enforcement of regulations for nuclear power plants in the interest of public health and safety and for the protection of the environment. Changes in NRC's regulatory responsibilities can stem from the public's will and the resulting Congressional action.

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Ms. Nancy B. Wenger

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I appreciate your concerns and assure you that every effort is being made to ensure the continued protection of the health and safety of the public, not only at Three Mile Island, but also at all nuclear power plants.

Sincerely,

Bernard J. Snyder, Program Director
Three Mile Island Program Office
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Enclosure: Summary of NUREG-0558

DISTRIBUTION

Docket 50-289

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SURNAME →	Woliu:bmf	DBrinkman	BSnyder		
DATE →	7/10/80	7/10/80	7/15/80		

Nancy B. Wenger
522 Antoine Street
Harrisburg, Pa. 17102
June 13, Wednesday

Addressee: H DENTON 478

Dear Sirs and Madames;

This is an open letter to all of you who are governing this country. I am a concerned taxpayer and voting citizen, and I feel I am quite justified in expressing my anger over the irresponsible handling (or mishandling) of decisions that are adversely affecting the citizens of this nation. I as one of these citizens feel cheated and deceived, and I will explain why as this letter continues.

For three years I lived near the Three Mile Island plant, believing that the government would keep me informed if there were any dangers with nuclear energy. On March 28th, I learned that I should never believe what I am told by government officials or businessmen. Unfortunately, I found out that even the officials I believed in and voted for are in on this game of putting profits before people. Still, on March 28th, I heard a great deal of assurance speeches.....in the wake of the most serious nuclear accident our country has seen.

We were told in Harrisburg that the government does not take chances with the lives of its citizens, and yet many of us found out (not from any government officials) that a little goodie called the Price-Anderson Act protects TMI or any other nuclear power plant from taking responsibility for damages they may (and have already) inflict upon citizens. I must have insurance to drive my car or I will be arrested. I accept this responsibility because I am a safe driver and do not wish to inflict any pain on others without accepting responsibility for it. Apparently nuclear power plants cannot say the same thing.....and yet they claim to be "safe". I voted some of you in....and I feel strongly that all of you in official positions have a responsibility foremost to us your citizens. I ask that you irrediatly take steps to see to it that the Price-Anderson Act be declared unconstitutional, and repealed (retroactively). I also ask that you see to it that a law like that, which favors big business over people never be permitted to pass again.

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DUPLICATE

Around the time of the TMI accident, we all had to make a decision upon the conflicting reports we had heard, to stay or leave. I and my family left irrediatly, risking our job security, and the security of our home. Now we have returned, still not knowing how much radiation is leaking, where the radioactive water will be dumped, and what the future effect upon our health will be. I have not drunk milk since March 28th. I am afraid to plant a garden for fear that radiation may come through in the vegetables. I fear for the lives of my friends, many of whom live or attend college within a few miles of that plant. I fear for the lives of children I have taught in school in Steelton.....also a few miles from the plant. I fear for the radiation they may have received on Wednesday, March 28th, when in the midst of the largest radiation leaks, schools were disrissed in the area, sending young children out to walk home, wait for busses, and play outside until their parents came home from work.

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We are told, matter of factly that nuclear wastes don't break down as fast as most materials. Then volunteers against nuclear energy and former nuclear engineers who have seen the light tell us that in fact, they don't break down for thousands of years, and continue to poison future generations. We hear of St. George, Utah, and the Love Canal, and already we see what these wastes are doing to people. And yet you continue to authorize these new plants, and give others the okay for beginning operation.

You say you have safe places to bury this waste. It is buried in lead containers? How fast do these lead containers break down? Eight or nine years? That leaves at least 990 years of nuclear poisonings. Also, as you are finding "safe" places to bury these wastes, more wastes are accumulating. If the safe places we are using now include earthquake faults, what kinds of places will we be using in fifteen years? Elementary school playgrounds, or hospital recovery rooms? The more waste you bury, the more cancers are caused, thus filling our hospitals, and creating more disabled persons. Is this helping our country?

Nuclear power is the only economically feasible way to create electricity you tell me. Economics mean nothing to me when I may be dying within 10 years. I am only 25 years old and I want to live and have children. It seems to me that there must be some way to generate electricity without killing people. Berwick Power plant on the Susquehanna will be opening soon unless people like myself can stop it. The customers in that area have been told that their rates will go up 12% when Unit I opens and 10% when Unit II opens. A 22% raise in rates is not what I call an economically advantageous energy source.

Economically feasible you say.....for whom? For the citizens of Harrisburg? Of course not. We have just begun the route back to improvement after a major flood in 1972. What will TMI do to this town? I know who benefits from nuclear energy and it is not the taxpayer. It is a slur-lord mentality. The utility companies are protected by the government as they not only rape this land and kill the people and animals who inhabit it, but make money doing so. But let's let the citizens of Middletown and Harrisburg pay for the crippled TMI plant.

Haven't we paid enough?

I am a special education teacher, and I have worked with and taught many children with genetic disorders. It is a sad and frustrating thing to see. Have you ever spent any time with an anencephali or microcephali child? They have very minimal brain tissue. They do not speak or walk. They lie prone and are totally dependent upon others for their care. This is a terrible heartache for the parents, and the heartache lasts a lifetime. Is it worth the profits to create this kind of future generation? My husband and I both have graduate degrees, we are from families of ministers, prets, artists and doctors. We would love very much to raise a child in a loving and stimulating environment. Will we have a nuclear baby? I have learned from people who worked for the nuclear industry that anencephali and microcephali are the main disorders caused by radiation. I sincerely hope you will research these disorders and decide if you think the risk is worth it.

I am not an expert on radiation. Nor am I an expert on energy or economics. There are many people who do know a great deal about these fields and it is my hope that somehow I will be able to make myself heard to those people so that they know the human side of the story and do not go off "half-cocked" with an energy or economics plan that can destroy the people who are the core of this and any nation.

My field of expertise is teaching. I try to build future generations. My job is hard and I do my best to do it well. At times I am extremely frustrated that the work I am doing for future generations can all be destroyed by greedy officials who can not see beyond their pocketbooks. It is my hope that somehow I will be able to instill in the children I teach a sense of responsibility and moral honesty so that if they survive long enough to help run this country someday, they will run it with a sense of what is good for humanity, and therefore good for the country. However, in the midst of my working I feel a sense of despair when I think that these children, who you may call "guinea pigs", or "statistics" may die of leukemia before they reach the ripe old age of 20.

I shall try to be optimistic at this point, although it is difficult. Perhaps we can turn this around. Many former workers in the nuclear field have looked honestly at the documents regarding damages done by nuclear energy and they have taken a moral stance, and have admitted they were wrong to ever support such a monstrosity. They have endeared themselves to citizens like myself in doing this. Although their mistakes are serious ones, they have turned and made very heroic attempts to stop this before it destroys more of this world. They have stopped playing the game of power and politics, and instead chosen morality and truth. Will you please do the same before it is too late?

Legislate that no utility shall ever again have the license to kill that has been given to them by the Price-Anderson Act.

Start a campaign for energy conservation, including cutbacks on useless electrical devices, and providing economic benefits for those who use less electricity.

Stress that the federal and state governments put more money into the research and use of solar power.

Stop the construction of all new nuclear energy plants. Close down all plants that have a history of accidents and/or safety violations.

Demand that the utility companies, and not the taxpayers be responsible for the damage they have done. Provide no governmental monies for the massive expenses of this accident. Perhaps the utility companies will voluntarily turn away from nuclear energy, because it is too expensive.

Open up the top-secret files and educate the citizens about the dangers that are lurking in their back yards. Take an honest look at these documents. Is nuclear energy really safe? Fine...then show us the documents as proof. If it is not safe...take an honest look at these documents yourself and carefully consider what your stance is- Make your decision and live with it.

I am asking you to give the citizens fair and honest answers. We are not peasants of Medieval Europe who wouldn't understand or don't deserve to know. We are stockholders in this government called a democracy. From what I have learned in the many years of American History, we are to have a say. Either the history books were lying, and we actually live in a Totalitarian society, or the History of this country has been a story of men and women building a country where people can have a say.....only to have the present day government destroying that.

If you all can't make a personal response to myself and other people of this country, make it a point to respond to these issues in your next batch of campaign issues. And please spare us the public relations bullshit. Read my letter again and respond to the feelings behind the words. I need answers, and I need honest ones. Many other citizens in this country are asking for the same things.

Are you a moral person? Do you try to raise your children morally, and with a sense of doing what is best? Then look carefully at yourself and what you stand for. Make your decisions in government reflect you and your beliefs. Say no to corruption and big business control. Perhaps there is so much corruption that one congressman or congresswoman can't make a difference. That is why I am sending this letter to so many of you. You are the only ones who can make a difference. We are trying, but honestly don't know if you are listening to us.

Are you listening?

Sincerely,

Nancy B. Wenger

Nancy B. Wenger

"Dr." Denton —

As an alumna of both Lebanon Valley College and Penn State Capitol Campus, I am happy to see a good man honored as you have been. However, you were a hero because we needed one. The crisis is not over with the closing of TMI. The hero will be one who values human life over profits. Thank you for stepping in when needed. Please step again!