

TOM CORCORAN
19TH DISTRICT, ILLINOIS

INTERSTATE AND FOREIGN
COMMERCE COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND POWER
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND
INVESTIGATIONS
POST OFFICE AND CIVIL
SERVICE COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMPENSATION
AND EMPLOYEE BENEFITS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON POSTAL OPERATIONS
AND SERVICES

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

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September 29, 1980

Mr. William J. Dircks
Acting Executive Director
of Operations
Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, DC 20555

Dear Mr. Dircks:

Thank you for your June 26 letter with which you enclosed a copy of NUREG-0686, a Draft Environmental Statement relative to the proposed chemical decontamination of Commonwealth Edison's Dresden Nuclear Power Station Unit No. 1. As you may recall, your letter was in response to my May 12 letter in which I requested to be kept informed of NRC's actions in connection with this matter. I did not urge upon NRC a particular course of action regarding the proposed Dresden decontamination in my May 12 letter, nor do I do so now. However, I am concerned about the delays and confusion which seem to be evident with respect to this project, and it is those delays and confusion which I would like to address in this letter.

Subsequent to our previous correspondence, I have received a September 15 letter from Mr. James J. O'Connor, Chairman and President of Commonwealth Edison. As you can see from the enclosed copy of that letter, ComEd states that its financial ability to bring Dresden back on line in a timely manner was seriously impaired as a result of the late April decision by NRC's Director of Licensing requiring that an Environmental Impact Statement would have to be prepared and issued for public comment. According to ComEd, this decision was a direct change from the position that the NRC staff had recommended. ComEd states that, as of September 15, NRC delays have resulted in additional direct labor costs of \$360,000 and impending additional costs of \$100,000 per month. According to ComEd, DOE has contributed \$8.25 million and ComEd has spent an additional \$25.3 million in connection with this project.

Particularly in view of the significant amount of U.S. taxpayer and ComEd ratepayer money involved here, I would be interested in your comments regarding ComEd's September 15 letter. While I lack technical expertise in this area, I am concerned about the apparent delays and confusion discussed by ComEd. My interest is in having the public interest served, and ComEd's letter would seem to indicate that perhaps the public interest is not being well served by NRC in this case, particularly in view of the fact that ComEd first submitted its decontamination proposal almost six years ago. I am also interested in the significance of the involvement of the Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards, which has just announced that it has scheduled a technical meeting on this issue on October 8 in Washington, DC.

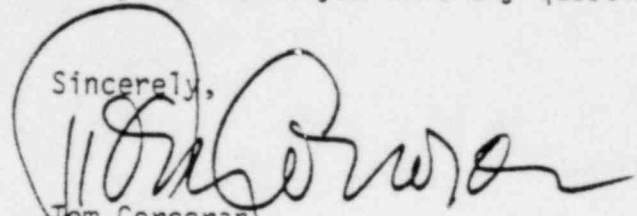
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Mr. William J. Dircks
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As the only Illinois member of the Commerce Committee's Energy and Power Subcommittee, I am particularly interested in NRC's actions on this matter, especially in view of the fact that the Dresden facility is located in my district. I look forward to receiving your comments, and I would appreciate your keeping me currently informed as to the status of the Dresden project in terms of NRC's involvement with the project.

Please feel free to contact me, or Al Cobb of my staff, if you have any questions or would like additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Corcoran". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "T".

Tom Corcoran
Representative in Congress
15th District, Illinois

enc.



Commonwealth Edison
One First National Plaza, Chicago, Illinois
Address Reply to: Post Office Box 767
Chicago, Illinois 60690

September 15, 1980

RIA

Honorable Tom Corcoran
1107 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D. C. 20515

Dear Tom:

A number of developments have taken place in the last few months which profoundly affect our future plans for Unit 1 at the Dresden Nuclear Power station. I am writing to you to provide you with a concise summary of these events and our decisions.

Almost six years ago we reached the conclusion that in order to operate Dresden 1 efficiently for another decade or more, it would be prudent to do a chemical cleaning operation (decontamination) of the primary piping system. The reason for this is that over the years accumulations of metal and oxide, including radioactive iron, nickel, cobalt, etc. have built up at various points in the piping system. These accumulations increase the level of radioactivity at various places in the plant where personnel have to conduct inspections, modifications, and repair work. We concluded that if a successful chemical cleaning could be accomplished that it would be possible to continue to operate this Unit for a significant number of years. Dresden 1 has been an extremely economical source of energy and its 200 megawatts of capacity have played an important role in recent years in reducing the need for oil-fired generation, especially during certain portions of the year.

Three years ago we embarked on this project in cooperation with ERDA (now DOE). To date they have contributed \$8.25 million and Commonwealth Edison has spent an additional \$25.3 million on efforts related to the decontamination project and associated upgrades. Throughout this entire period we have been involved with the NRC project staff concerning regulatory conditions and requirements which we must comply with in performing this project.

Commonwealth Edison prepared many submittals and the NRC prepared an Environmental Impact Assessment early this year which concluded that the environmental impact of the entire project will be minimal. We had hoped to conduct the decontamination

operation in late April of 1980 and we were awaiting approval of the Environmental Impact Assessment and issuance of the necessary license changes by the NRC. In late April we were informed by the NRC that the Director of Licensing had made a decision that an Environmental Impact Statement would have to be prepared and issued for public comment. This was a direct change from the position that the NRC staff had recommended. NRC's estimate was a four-month delay, and in our judgment we estimated that four months was an absolute minimum. The NRC issued its Draft EIS at the end of May.

The lengthy outage of Dresden 1 originally called for the completion of a number of important upgrades to the system. These include new safety injection systems and structural modifications which the NRC feels are required to bring the plant, which was originally licensed in 1960, into compliance with certain current safety standards. Of course, to do the work on the primary system, it is essential to complete the chemical cleaning first, so that workers will be exposed to a minimum of radiation.

Throughout 1979 and especially during 1980 the Commonwealth Edison Company has been faced with serious revenue problems which have affected our cash position and our ability to finance all of the projects we have in progress. We have had to make significant cuts and postponements in essential projects because our cash situation has left us no choice. In line with our practice of keeping our NRC Project Manager informed, we explained in the Spring of 1980 that we would not be able to proceed with all of the design modifications to Dresden 1 on the original schedule and that major expenditures would have to be delayed.

After the decision by NRC to call for an Environmental Impact Statement and interject a minimum of four months delay, we were forced to look at our entire capital spending program and consider alternatives for Dresden 1. The delay and the uncertainty of when the plant could be returned to service, particularly considering the unpredictability of NRC licensing decisions, led us to conclude that all capital spending on Dresden 1 after the chemical cleaning should be deferred. In light of the necessity to spend a large amount of money to complete construction of the LaSalle and Byron nuclear stations, we concluded that it would be necessary to defer even the decision about further spending on Dresden 1 until 1985. This decision was reached after extensive internal reviews and discussions in early August and on August 14 a letter from our Licensing Administrator to the NRC Project Office (attached) officially informed the NRC of this change in schedule. However, the NRC Project Manager had been kept up-to-date as our internal discussion proceeded.

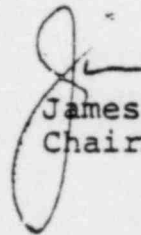
September 15, 1980

We currently are awaiting the issuance of the NRC Environmental Impact Statement, reflecting changes that may have been made as a result of the public comment period, within the next few days. The statement will be issued on an internal basis to NRC and on a similar basis to the U. S. EPA for a period of 30 days. Barring unexpected developments we now anticipate we will be able to initiate the chemical cleaning around the beginning of December.

To date these delays have resulted in additional direct labor costs of \$360,000 which were not contemplated under any of our previous schedules. Every additional month of delay increases this amount by another \$100,000.

We are disappointed with the delays and with the decisions we have had to make concerning the future of Dresden Unit 1. I will see to it that you are kept informed of developments concerning this and related matters in the future.

Sincerely,



James J. O'Connor
Chairman and President

Attachment