

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, U.S.
WASHINGTON, D. C.

TP 710-1

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January 6, 1981

TERN

Office of Congressional
Affairs
Nuclear Regulatory Commission
1717 H Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20555

The attached communication is submitted for your consideration, and to ask that the request made therein be complied with, if possible.

If you will advise me of your action in this matter and have the letter returned to me with your reply, I will appreciate it.

re: Kathleen McCue



Very truly yours,

Benjamin A. Gilman
BENJAMIN A. GILMAN M.C.
NY-26

DOCKET NUMBER: PR-70-30, District 150
PROPOSED RULE (48 FR 70074)
SMELTED ALLOYS

B10 2270 424

L-41, P4, 30

December 10, 1980

The Honorable Benjamin Gillman
The United States House of
Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Gillman:

The Nuclear Regulatory news release of October 29, 1980 in summary stated that they wanted to allow the nuclear industry to sell their scrap metals to manufacturers who could use these metals in the production of such products as automobiles, appliances, furniture, utensils, personal items, and coins. This scrap metal that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission is willing to sell will be used in products that Americans will be in direct contact with every day. This same metal has been contaminated during the process of uranium enrichment. The NRC promises that the radioactive metal will be smelted, and by smelting this scrap metal, "it is hoped" that the contamination will be reduced.

The nuclear industry by this action, is once more looking for a substitute for the proper disposal of nuclear waste. While the question of disposal is a complicated one, clearly the answer is not in exposing men, women, and children to contaminated materials. The possible consequences of this "solution" appear grave and perhaps irreversible. Extreme caution must be used even before the risks are known precisely. Clearly, the risks are not known when the NRC continues to use such phrases as "it is hoped."

It is difficult to identify the adverse effects that this measure could cause. The technological problems in doing lab analyses, in making diagnoses, in determining behavioral effects, and in assembling statistics make the problem of identification a difficult one. Still, it is one that must be solved. One thing that is obvious, though, is that effects are related to exposure; and that items and products used every day can only lead to further exposure to contaminated materials. Before exposing countless numbers to products which may cause them great harm, we owe it to them and to posterity to be sure of the hazardous effects which may arise with the use of these products.

~~056~~ - David

Relating the effects to their causes, deciding whether experimental findings are significant, and extrapolating from animals to man are all problems which must be overcome before switching from experiments to conclusions. We are still in the experimental stage, yet it would appear that the NRC is concluding that exposure to contaminated materials is relatively safe. Relative to what, sir? Surely not in relation to exposure to uncontaminated materials.

Congressional hearings on radiation, automobile safety, DDT, drug safety, air pollution, and cosmetics have realized positive results. It is right that the Congress makes value judgements, and not scientists. The representatives of the people are those who must judge for society what is safe and what is not. The decision of one small group can influence the well-being of an entire nation for many years to come, and what one nation decides can affect the fate of millions, or even billions, of unconsulted people around the world. What we do today will affect not only ourselves and not only our children, but our descendants for many generations to come. Before threatening the well-being of all these people, hadn't we ought to at least be aware of the health hazards that such a measure would cause? The NRC doesn't know what these hazards are. "The NRC...has estimated that less than one health effect would result from the recycled uranium plant scrap." One health effect per what? Does this depend on the amount and the time of exposure? Most importantly, how does the NRC define "health effect"?

The Congress must stop the proposed experiment on human guinea pigs. Further investigations must be made on the possible effects this measure would cause. While the nuclear industry would be relieved of the problem of the disposal of contaminated waste (at the same time earning \$41.6 million dollars), and no new metal would need to be produced for manufacturers, this clearly cannot be the solution until all the questions surrounding the problem are answered. Certainly the benefits of this "short-cut" such as cheap energy, and the reduced need for capital and labor cannot outweigh the probable costs. We must review our priorities and act accordingly. The trust that society places in its leaders is earned, and to maintain that trust, leaders must protect and safeguard society's interests. Clearly one of those interests is that the products used by Americans daily be safe, non-hazardous, and uncontaminated.

Sincerely,



Kathleen McCue
SUNY Binghamton