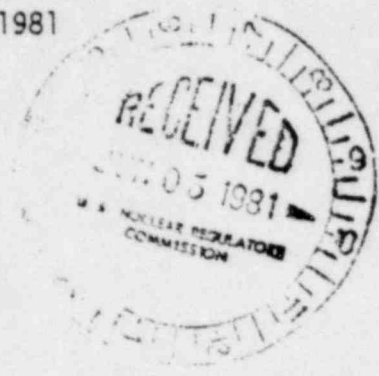




UNITED STATES  
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION  
ATOMIC SAFETY AND LICENSING BOARD PANEL  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555

DOCKET NUMBER  
50-289

June 1, 1981



Mr. Charles H. Field  
Editor of the Editorial Page  
The Harrisburg Patriot  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17105

Dear Mr. Field:

The Atomic Safety and Licensing Board for the Three Mile Island 1 restart proceeding has almost concluded the formal evidentiary hearings. We began to receive limited appearance statements from the public in November 1979 and continued to receive them through mid-May of this year. Written limited appearance statements submitted now will still be considered carefully by each Board member.

About 200 persons came to the hearing to express their views on the issues. About two thousand more have written to us. Several local intervening groups have spent weeks, even months presenting evidence in the proceeding.

The issues involved in the possible restart of TMI-1 have evoked strong feelings in many persons, and those sentiments have been openly and vigorously expressed to us--almost always with courtesy and consideration. Many have expressed the thoughtful understanding that the decisions we must make are difficult and important. My Board colleagues, Dr. Linda W. Little, Dr. Walter. H. Jordan and I wish to thank all those who have appeared at our hearing or set their thoughts down in writing.

The limited appearance statements are important to us, and were welcomed. This is why we were concerned when the Patriot editorial of April 27, 1981 entitled "Restart Hearings -- Operating in a Vacuum" asserted just the opposite. (The same editorial was entitled "Hear! Hear!" in the Evening News.)

In November 1979 we held three long sessions for public limited appearance statements in large auditoriums, and many persons attended. This is consistent with NRC practice, which is to receive statements from the public before the evidence is heard so that the boards and parties may be informed early of matters which should be covered by the evidence. We did not adjourn those sessions until everyone wishing to speak had an opportunity to do so. Following the early sessions there were very few requests for oral limited appearances and those were handled on an individual basis.

Later the Board received about 35 organized requests to set a session for limited appearances for March 5, 1981. We held a session on that date. Many attended and all but 17 limited appearances were received. In view of the fact that our reservation for space for an additional session was cancelled and because of the manageable number of requests to

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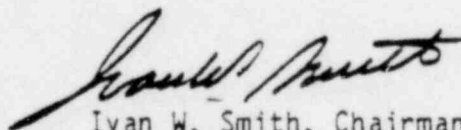
make appearances, the Board decided to receive the remaining limited appearances in our smaller Court Street hearing room at the mutual convenience of the speaker, the Board and parties. This worked out quite well. We noticed that the communication between the Board and the speakers improved; the speakers felt less hurried, less distracted and more composed than when speaking before large audiences. It was not difficult to arrange time to speak. Any written or oral request was adequate. The only condition was that decorum prevail.

We also tried to identify and to invite the 17 persons who were not reached on March 5 and most of those have since made their appearances. When we heard of persons who wanted to speak we actively sought them out. Sometimes Board personnel made many attempts to reach persons who came to our attention as being interested in speaking. We had to decide in late April that we could not accept new requests for appointments to make appearances because of the uncertain schedule for the remaining evidentiary sessions. However, we continued to hear from those who appeared at the hearings at times when their statements would not be disruptive.


As of this date we cannot identify any person who has requested an opportunity to make a limited appearance who has not been invited to appear, except for a few whom we have been unable to contact after repeated efforts.

The NRC policy, its traditional practice, and the actions taken by our Board have attempted to foster public participation. Not only did the statements appropriately express "the depth and breadth of local feeling" as you accurately report, but in several instances informed members of the public brought to the attention of the Board and parties factual areas which should be covered by the evidence. As a result we have received testimony and other evidence which might not have been presented were it not for public limited appearances. We valued these efforts highly.

Sincerely yours,



Ivan W. Smith, Chairman  
Atomic Safety and Licensing Board

cc: Docketing and Service   
(For service on parties)