

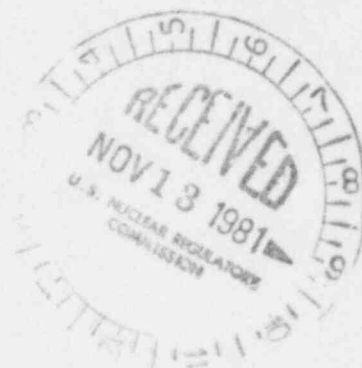


UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20555

PDR

November 4, 1981

The Honorable Richard L. Ottinger
Chairman, Subcommittee on Energy
Conservation and Power
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515



Dear Mr. Chairman:

The letter written to me by you and Chairman Dingell on October 23, 1981 has led me to reflect upon some of the difficulties inherent in my position as Chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

One example, as you pointed out, is the awkward position in which I can be placed by participating in a press conference such as the one held at the White House on October 8, 1981. On one hand, it is difficult to refuse a White House request to explain the impact of the President's policy on the work of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. At the same time, I can understand the concerns you expressed.

With regard to the question you raised about my specific response, "Yes, that's correct," it related to Secretary Edwards' sentence and question, "There are 33 of those, I believe. Is that correct, Mr. Palladino?" The number 33 in turn referred to "plants already under construction and awaiting licensing." I am forwarding, as an enclosure to this letter, several papers relating to your expressed interest in NRC documents which concern Commission consideration of measures to facilitate the licensing of plants already under construction. These papers, while not exhaustive, illustrate the Commission's activities on this subject.

With regard to the other concern you expressed about my comments, I agree that it would have been preferable for me to say that, "We are scheduled to make licensing decisions for some 33 plants" rather than, "We will expect to issue some 33 operating licenses." By my general statement, I did not intend to suggest that I, or the Commission, had already made the licensing decisions. The specific licensing decisions, as part of the general licensing challenge, are ahead of us, as I intended to reflect in my statement that,

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"It will be an unprecedented pace of licensing and we will have to do a careful and professional job to make sure that we are consistent with our mandate to protect the health and safety of the public."

I understand the basis for your concerns. I share your interest and emphasis on maintaining the independence of the NRC, and I will try to avoid pitfalls that would undermine or appear to undermine that independence.

Sincerely,


Nunzio A. Palladino

Enclosures:

1. Commission Statement on
Policy on Conduct of
Licensing Proceedings,
20 May 1981
2. J. M. Hendrie Testimony,
18 June 1981
3. 10 CFR Part 2, Amendment
to Final Rule on Review
Procedures for Licensing
Board Decisions re OL
Applications

cc: Hon. Carlos J. Moorhead
Commissioner Gilinsky
Commissioner Bradford
Commissioner Ahearne
Commissioner Roberts