

SILVIO O. CONTE  
FIRST DISTRICT, MASSACHUSETTS

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS  
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ENVIRONMENT, SAFETY, AND RESEARCH  
  
MIGRATORY BIRD  
CONSERVATION COMMISSION  
  
BOARD OF REGENTS  
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

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

WASHINGTON ADDRESS:  
2300 RAYBURN OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515  
PHONE: 202-225-5335

DISTRICT OFFICES:  
FEDERAL BUILDING  
78 CENTER STREET ARTERIAL  
PITTSFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS 01201  
PHONE: 413-442-0946

ROOM 205  
POST OFFICE BUILDING  
650 DWIGHT STREET  
HOLYOKE, MASSACHUSETTS 01040  
PHONE: 413-532-7010

DOCKET NUMBER **50-29**  
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November 20, 1980



Mr. Carl Kammerer, Director  
Congressional Affairs  
Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
1717 H Street, N. W.  
Washington, D. C. 20555

Dear Carl:

Please find enclosed copies of correspondence from a group of my constituents regarding the Yankee Atomic Plant in Rowe, Massachusetts. As residents of the immediate area, they are obviously concerned about the health and safety of their families.

I would appreciate it if you and your staff would respond to this organization as soon as possible regarding this important matter.

With warm regards, I am

Cordially yours,

*Silvio O. Conte*  
Silvio O. Conte  
Member of Congress

SOC/gd

Enclosure

cc: Elaine Parmett

cc: Rowe Nuclear Conversion Campaign

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Upper Elm Street  
Shelburne Falls, Ma. 01370  
November 2, 1980

Dear Mr. Conte,

Since the beginning of October some concerned community members of Franklin County have been unable to receive information requested from both the Directors of Yankee Electric Company and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

We are writing to you as we are frustrated by the lack of response by the above.

On October 2nd a public meeting was held with 250 people present representing a broad segment of the people from surrounding towns by age and occupation. No representative from the main office of Yankee chose to appear. We would, therefore, like you to contact the main office in Westborough and request that they answer the 75 questions sent to them by registered mail.

We would also appreciate your help in contacting the N.R.C. and requesting that they set up a public hearing in Franklin County regarding Yankee with all sides present.

Please send us copies of all correspondence concerning this matter.

If possible, it would be helpful if you could come to this area and meet with us.

In my opinion whether one agrees or disagrees on the safety of nuclear power, I strongly feel that the people of the United States are entitled to information from a public utility.

Sincerely,  
*Elaine Parmett*  
Elaine Parmett

Encls.

NOV 7 1980

Home 1-43-25 9083

ROWE NUCLEAR CONVERSION CAMPAIGN  
BOX 3-2-1  
Rowe, Ma., 01367

To: Yankee Atomic Electric Company  
Executive Offices  
20 Turnpike Drive  
Westborough, Ma., 01581

From: Concerned citizens in Franklin and Berkshire Counties  
Re: Unanswered Questions

Dear Friends,

We are neighbors of the Yankee Atomic plant in Rowe. We live in the Berkshires and in the Valley, sharing this beautiful place. We love this land and our lives here. We work hard, and hope for a long, healthy and peaceful life for ourselves and our families.

Since Three Mile Island, we have become increasingly concerned about the nuclear plant in our back yard. It is now time for us to raise our deep concerns in a public way.

YANKEE ATOMIC in Rowe, Massachusetts has been shut down since January. Before it re-opens this November, we'd like answers to these unanswered questions.

1. **Yankee Atomic in Rowe is 20 years old this November. *Is this plant wearing out?***
  - What is the life expectancy of a nuclear power plant?
  - Has any commercial plant ever functioned longer than 20 years?
  - Was it not announced at the beginning of the plant's life, that its life expectancy was 20 years?
  - Yankee Rowe has been closed since January. The last two times Yankee attempted to start up, there were accidents. Are these accidents related to the old age of the plant?
  - Can we be assured that there will not be more accidents when the plant attempts to re-open?
2. **What plans exist for the *decommissioning* of Yankee Atomic? How much will it cost? And *who pays for it?***
  - Will the Yankee Atomic Electric Company guarantee that the high cost of decommissioning this plant be paid by the owning utilities and stockholders—not the consumer?
  - Will all plans for decommissioning the plant be made public immediately?
  - Will citizens be given a voice in the important decisions surrounding decommissioning?
3. **In the event of a permanent shutdown at Yankee Rowe, *will the Yankee Atomic Electric Company guarantee job security for all its employees?***
  - If the plant is closed by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission?
  - If the plant is closed by a major, Three Mile Island type of accident?
  - If the plant must close because of its old age?
  - If the plant is closed by public opinion?
4. **In case of a nuclear accident, *what is the evacuation plan?***
  - Our schools, hospitals, nursing homes and businesses are all especially vulnerable in such an emergency. How will we safely evacuate these places?
  - How effective are current plans, which in some cases move citizens closer to the plant?
  - Will the Yankee Atomic Electric Company accept full financial responsibility, over and above the limited government insurance, for any losses of our property or business?

(continued)

- a solution to the problems of safe, long term storage for radioactive waste?*
- Will waste disposal plans for this area be made public?
  - How much waste is stored in Rowe? How safe is it? For how long?
  - Who is responsible for the costs of nuclear waste disposal at Rowe? The consumers? The stockholders? Taxpayers?
  - Will the Yankee Atomic Electric Company guarantee that Rowe, Massachusetts will not be used for a New England-wide nuclear waste dump?
  - What are the effects of nuclear radiation on our health?

AS NEIGHBORS of New England's oldest nuclear power plant, we want a say in deciding the answers to these important questions. We also have concerns.

WE ARE CONCERNED for the quality of our lives here. We're concerned that in 1977 and 1978, cows' milk in Franklin County was contaminated with Strontium 90 and Cesium 137. While the company insists this was due to Chinese bomb fallout, research shows there was not a bomb test within 3 months of the readings.

Rather, the contamination came exactly at the times when faulty fuel problems plagued the plant, causing releases of radiation. The fuel problems soon after required shutdown of the plant. This information became public knowledge only after it was subpoenaed by the Greenfield Court during an anti-nuclear protest trial.

WE TRUST that the company still stands behind this statement:

**"NO PART OF OUR OPERATION HAS EVER BEEN KEPT SECRET. OUR PLANT HAS ALWAYS BEEN OPEN TO EVERYONE AND WE'VE ALWAYS BEEN GLAD TO SEND OUR REPORTS TO WHOMEVER MIGHT REQUEST THEM."**

*—Plant Superintendent, Wendell Johnson, 1964*

In the spirit of this statement, we've arranged for a PUBLIC MEETING to address these and other important questions. Please send at least one member of the Board of Directors of Yankee Atomic Electric Company to provide answers to these questions. Since many of these questions involve company policy, it is absolutely necessary that we talk with a member of the board which makes these policies. We promise that this forum will not be a debate, but an open and honest question and answer session.

#### **PUBLIC MEETING**

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 2nd, 1980  
Mohawk Trail Regional High School  
Auditorium  
R.e. 112  
Buckland, Ma.  
7:00 p.m.**

Of course, we will be happy to speak with you anytime, but for the benefit of everyone, we expect to see you on October 2nd.

Sincerely,

**The Rowe Nuclear Conversion Campaign  
Box 3-2-1  
Rowe, Ma. 01367  
R.S.V.P. (413) 339-5362 or (413) 625-6196**

Your Neighbors -  
YANKEE ATOMIC

Yankee Atomic has been a resident of the town of Rowe for 20 years. Each day over 100 of your friends and neighbors come from their homes in Rowe and surrounding communities to work at the Yankee plant. We who live here and work at Yankee appreciate the wonderful quality of life in the Deerfield River Valley. Many of us have been here since 1966 when construction first started on the plant.

In November, Yankee celebrates its 20th birthday. We who operate the plant are very proud of our 20 years of safe service. In those 20 years our plant has produced over 20 billion kilowatt hours and saved over 35 million barrels of oil and millions of dollars for the people of New England.

Recently we received a copy of a letter containing a list of questions about Yankee. These questions and our answers may be of interest to many people in the valley. For this reason we are sending our answers to local newspapers. We hope they will print these answers in their entirety so that everyone who is interested can read them.

Now, for the questions:

Question 1: Yankee Atomic in Rowe is 20 years old this November. Is this plant wearing out?

Answer 1: The life expectancy of any power plant is about 30 to 40 years. Yankee Atomic has an operating license which extends through 1997. We sincerely hope the plant operates until then and perhaps beyond. Yankee is the third oldest commercial nuclear plant in the United States. The oldest is in Shippingport, Pa., which started operation in 1957 and is still operating.

Yankee Rowe has been shut down since February of this year to repair the steam turbine, a non-nuclear part of the plant. These turbines are common to all electric plants that burn oil, coal or gas. We expect that Yankee Atomic will be operating again in November.

With the maintenance, improvements and attention we are giving the plant, Yankee should be able to operate for some years to come. In the past 20 years of operation, Yankee Rowe has outperformed many of the newer plants, leading credence to the adage that with nuclear plants, as with people, "the older you get the better you get."

Question 2: What plans exist for the decommissioning of Yankee Atomic? How much will it cost? And who pays for it?

Answer 2: There are no definite plans for decommissioning the Rowe plant at this time. As previously stated, the operating license for the plant extends until 1997 and we hope to operate the plant at least that long.

However, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) can revoke the license at any time. If that were to happen, the plant would have to be decommissioned. We would expect to dismantle the plant completely and restore the site to a natural site, suitable for any use.

Prior to dismantling, an environmental impact statement would normally be prepared by the NRC. Their usual practice is to publish such statements for public comment before decommissioning could proceed.

We have estimated the cost of decommissioning the plant at about \$30 million in today's dollars. We would expect this decommissioning cost to be paid by the users of electricity from the plant, just as they pay the cost of building the plant and the other costs of producing the electricity, such as fuel, maintenance and taxes. This is true of any product - the user pays the cost of producing the product.

The decommissioning cost, when averaged over all the electricity produced by the plant, is only about 5 percent of the cost of electricity from Rowe. The cost of power from the Rowe plant has been so low that over the past five years alone it has saved the users approximately \$60 million. Today, if we had to shut down Yankee and build a new plant to replace the power, we would have to spend about \$240 million. So you can see we all have an economic incentive to keep Yankee operating.

Question 3: In the event of a permanent shutdown at Yankee Rowe, will Yankee guarantee job security for all its employees?

Answer 3: Yankee Rowe is staffed with highly skilled personnel who are in great demand. The competence of these people is continually maintained through retraining and requalification in their areas of expertise. The Yankee plant has been the source of trained professionals for other nuclear plants particularly in New England. Hundreds of Yankee-trained professionals are assuming leadership roles in the nuclear industry all over the country. In a job market where demand for the type of person employed by Yankee continually exists, our people will always be successfully employed. A job "guarantee" is neither appropriate nor necessary.

Question 4: In case of a nuclear accident, what is the evacuation plan?

Answer 4: Yankee has always had an approved emergency plan. In the last year we have been hard at work updating this plan. We have also worked with state and local officials to develop evacuation routes and emergency plans for

that, should an accident ever happen, our employees and the public would be protected. In July we submitted our revised emergency plan to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for their review. State and local agencies have also submitted their emergency plans to the Federal

Emergency Management Agency. Once comments are received, all plans will be finalized and tested.

Schools, hospitals and nursing homes receive special attention in all emergency plans. Protective actions, whether caused by floods, hurricanes, tornadoes or nuclear emergencies, are specified for these special facilities. If the event is serious enough, evacuation of these special facilities will be performed by local and state civil defense agencies.

Yankee Rowe carries \$100 million of liability insurance, plus an additional \$40 million of industry self insurance, combined to yield a total private insurance protection of \$50 million. On top of that, we also pay the government for an additional \$60 million worth of insurance for a total of \$50 million. As more nuclear plants become operational, this small amount of government insurance will be eliminated and the total private insurance coverage will be increased beyond \$50 million.

Question 5: Is there a solution to the problems of safe long term storage for radioactive waste?

Answer 5: The answer to this question is an unequivocal "yes." Virtually every scientific study since 1957 has concluded that safe radioactive waste storage is practical. As recently as 1979 the American Physical Society published a report stating that there are no technological barriers to safe storage. Radioactive waste disposal thus becomes a political problem rather than a technical problem. Congress has delegated the responsibility of high level waste storage to the Department of Energy. Congress seems about ready to enact legislation giving the Department of Energy necessary funding, authority and guidance to build a demonstration pilot facility to finally accomplish the task.

There are no waste disposal plans for our site in Rowe. The only waste storage at Rowe is low level waste temporarily stored prior to shipment to a waste repository in South Carolina or Washington state. We also store used fuel at the Yankee plant in water storage pools. We do not consider these used fuel elements as waste since these fuel elements still contain large amounts of useful fuel which can be recycled into new fuel. Until the federal government decides to resume such recycling, we will have to store the used fuel on site or ship the used fuel elements to a government repository.

Storing the fuel under water is common practice all over the world. The longer a fuel element is stored, the lower the radio activity that is contained inside. It is our hope that the government will soon decide to resume recycling of this used fuel so that we can utilize this valuable resource. The cost of waste disposal is paid by the users of electricity, just like all the other costs of producing electricity. These disposal costs are relatively small, amounting to about 3 percent of the total cost of electricity including an allowance for ultimate disposal by the federal government of high level waste from nuclear fuel processing.

It is highly unlikely that our Rowe site will ever be used for waste disposal purposes. It is our understanding that any such waste repository would have to be on government land. There is, however, a real need for a low-level waste depository somewhere in New England. The southern and western states are not going to accept our New England wastes forever, whether they come from hospitals, factories, or power plants.

Question 6: What are the effects of nuclear radiation on our health?

Answer 6: There are no measurable effects on our health from the radiation that we are exposed to. Natural environmental background levels are about 120 millirems each year. A single chest x-ray involves about 50 millirems of radiation. If you stood by the Yankee gate 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, you could get as much as 1 millirem additional, which is obviously insignificant. Some people have suggested that excessive radioactivity was released from the Rowe plant in 1977 and 1978, and that it contaminated milk in the area. This is ridiculous. It is not possible for Yankee to be the source of those temporary elevated levels in milk. Similar groundless charges were made by the same people at the Millstone Nuclear Plant site in Connecticut. The Environmental Protection Agency was asked by Congressman Duff to investigate. The EPA concluded that fallout from weapons testing was, in fact, the cause of elevated radioactive levels in the milk. If anyone wants to have a copy of the EPA letter we will be happy to provide them with a copy.

In conclusion, we who live in the Rowe area and work at Yankee are extremely proud of our job and the safety, health and environmental record that we have achieved to date. We are confident that we will continue to do so.

Herbert A. Swain is Chairman of the Yankee Atomic Electric Company Board.

ROWE NUCLEAR CONVERSION CAMPAIGN

Box 3-2-1

Ma., 01367

October 6, 1980

Chairman and Commissioners  
Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
11th Floor  
Washington, D.C., 20555

Dear Commissioners,

On October 2nd, 1980, 250 citizens who live near the Yankee Atomic plant in Rowe came to the Mohawk Trail Regional High School, in the hopes that Yankee Atomic Electric Company officials would answer their questions about the plant.

One month before this meeting, on September 2nd, our group sent the enclosed questions to the company headquarters in Westborough, Ma. We also sent a copy to the plant superintendent, Herb Autio. We requested the presence of a member of the Board of Directors, to answer questions at the meeting.

On September 27th, we received the enclosed response. Included was a statement that the power company would not send a representative to the meeting.

On September 29th, a delegation from our group went to the company headquarters in Westborough, urging them to reconsider their decision, and to please send someone to the meeting. We felt that for our own, and the public's, full understanding of the answers, we needed to discuss and clarify the responses with the company. The answers given us, as you can see, raise additional questions. We were told on this day that "it would not be productive" to have a Yankee Atomic representative at the meeting.

Any additional questions, we were told, would only be answered in writing. Numerous phone calls by area residents and local elected officials were responded to similarly.

We are some of the 250 people who attended the public meeting last Thursday. Most of us, as with those at the meeting, live in the 10 mile evaluation zone surrounding the plant. At the meeting, the people registered strong dissatisfaction with the written answers. 5 of the 6 questions were ruled "inadequate", by voice vote. The exception was question #3, ruled "inadequate" by a 3 to 2 margin.

People are angry and hurt by the fact that the company would not attend an open meeting with the plant's neighbors. We feel that the Yankee Atomic Electric Company does not have the concerns of the people in mind.

We have two requests of the N.R.C.:

1. Help in getting the cooperation of the Yankee Atomic Electric Company;

Please inform us as to what rights we have to ask questions of the company, and receive adequate answers about the operation of Yankee Atomic in Rowe. We would like to know what voice we are guaranteed, through your agency and others, in making the important decisions that affect our life here in Franklin and Berkshire Counties. Specifically, we want a say in the issues outlined in our letter to Yankee Atomic.

2. We request a public hearing, with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission here in Franklin County, Massachusetts, before the plant re-opens this fall;

As you are well aware, Yankee Rowe has been shut down since February, due to a turbine accident. A number of issues have been raised about the continued operation of this 20 year old nuclear plant. This is a formal request for a hearing, to decide whether Yankee Rowe should be allowed to re-open or not.

Please get back to us in the next week or so. Yankee Rowe, according to the company, is scheduled to re-open by November 1st. We look forward to hearing from you and meeting you, and Thank you for your concern.

sincerely,

the Rowe Nuclear Conversion Campaign  
(413) 839-8282

enclosure: Letter to Yankee Atomic, Response from Yankee Atomic, Signatures of the authors of this letter.

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