

8-03-82

50-289

Dear Mr. Denton,

I am writing to you because I feel that you are a man of honesty and integrity. We had confidence in what you said during the Three Mile Island Accident.

I have just come across a testimony of the ~~Admission~~ of Concerned Scientists in front of the US. Committee of Interior and Insular Affairs and I believe the document deserves an explanation. The hearing regarded the restart hearing conducted by the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board for the restart of Unit-One at Three Mile Island.

This testimony is shocking and a serious indictment of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Especially when the ASLB recommends restart of Unit-One. I don't want to believe the NRC and GPU got together before the hearing to get stories straight. I want to believe ~~the~~ ^{over} NRC operates in the interest of public safety and doesn't cater to the industry. But after reading this testimony, what am I to believe? If this nation is going to accept the risk of nuclear energy, we better take the time and spend the money to ensure each plant's optimum safety.

Could you please send me an explanation for the harsh report against our NRC and why certain safety measures (specified in the ~~last~~ US document have not been taken?)

Thank you.

XEOI

Sincerely,

W. Matt Huber

117 Shannon Drive

Lancaster PA 17603

P.S. We wouldn't want 60 minutes or a national news station to get a hold of this information would we?

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Editorial

22—The Patriot, Harrisburg, Pa., Wednesday, Dec. 16, 1981

TMI Restart

In the Ashes of an Accident

IF THE CALIBER of investigation, analysis and thought applied to a given problem could be measured by the time consumed in doing it and the weight of the final report, then the accomplishment of the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board looking into the restart of the Unit 1 nuclear reactor at Three Mile Island merits a high ranking. After spending many months taking testimony on the fitness of the undamaged nuclear plant and the competency of the management of General Public Utilities to operate it, the three-member board has released its findings in an 800-page report. Its predictable conclusion: The Nuclear Regulatory Commission should grant GPU permission to commence operation of the reactor.

But if the licensing board was "exhaustive" in its inquiry it surely was not thorough; if it asked many questions, it failed to ask the right questions; if it looked at every screw, it could not grasp the entirety of the problem. It did, essentially, what a previous licensing board had done in certifying the safety and soundness of Unit 2, which, in a shorter time than it took to pass the NRC's rigorous review, became a world symbol of a technology that not only failed, but threatened the lives and fortunes of thousands of people.

It is possible to separate the technical connections between the two reactors at TMI -- as is being done -- but it is even beyond the power of the NRC to alter their physical proximity or to extinguish the trauma inflicted from there on a public trusting of the judgment, integrity and technical competence of the utility and its nuclear overseer. The licensing board could deal with the myriad of technical questions, it could not -- it would not -- address the psychological result when a nuclear accident rendered volumes of self-assured technological reviews into gibberish and a reactor into radioactive mush. We have a right to ask why the licensing board's judgment will be right this time when it was wrong the last time.

THERE IS MORE to the issue of restarting Unit 1 than a technological evaluation made by a panel dedicated to isolating nuclear power decision-making from the influence of the host community. It is an indication of how devoid the process is of sensitivity to its mistakes and a measure of its lack of social accountability that the operation of Unit 1 can be considered while only yards away its sister plant sits in ruin, contaminated by radioactivity, an acknowledged health and safety hazard which continues unresolved.

The system has failed to come to grips with this nuclear stepchild. No one wants to admit paternity, so the easiest thing to do is to ignore it, let it sit there. The government licenses them, the utilities operate them and the Good Lord cleans them up. The system never was prepared to deal with a \$1 billion nuclear accident and it is no more prepared today, yet it proceeds with licensing of nuclear plants as if TMI never happened, as if it didn't exist, as if there wasn't an all too real risk of radioactive contamination of downstream community water systems and the irreplaceable Chesapeake Bay fishery.

Only a system that is morally bankrupt would carry on its ritual of attesting to the innocuousness of nuclear power plants across the ashes of one that says it isn't. The final decision on the recommendations of the licensing board rests with the full commission of the NRC and it will be less of a judgment on Unit 1 than it is a judgment on itself and the morality of the policies it pursues.