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TMI-2

STATEMENT

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LANCASTER, PENNSYLVANIA

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON NUCLEAR REGULATION

THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON

ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

NOVEMBER 8, 1979

On February 17, 1979, I was appointed interim Mayor of the City of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, by the City Council to serve the balance of the unexpired term of my predecessor who was appointed to a cabinet position with Governor Richard Thornburg. Our City charter provides for a strong Mayor form of government. My background has been in the Lancaster business community as president of the area's largest construction company. I have not had previous involvement with political life and my term in office will expire in January, 1980, as I did not seek to become a candidate for election to the office of Mayor.

The City of Lancaster was incorporated in 1818. The City and surrounding County of Lancaster were colonized by Swiss and French Huguenots; German Mennonites, Amish and Dunkards; Welsh; English Quaker; Scotch Irish; and Moravians. These early settlers laid the foundation for today's religious, hard-working, thrifty and conservative Lancaster communities. The City has about 60,000 residents with a County population of about 348,000.

Before I proceed further, I want to emphasize that I do not oppose commercial nuclear power. I realize there has never been an accident like the one at TMI, and because of the uniqueness of this accident, government and utility officials were understandably treading on new ground, and facing problems never before faced. For this reason, I want it to be understood that my criticisms are leveled in a constructive sense; so that, if such an accident should ever happen again, the mistakes will not be repeated.

The City of Lancaster's concern and involvement with events at Three Mile Island began as we learned through the news media of the existence of a potentially serious problem at the site. Because of Lancaster's proximity to Three Mile Island, a distance of approximately 23 miles, it was apparent from the outset that the rapidly changing events that took place in the days immediately following March 28 could have a substantial and direct effect upon our community.

As the person responsible for making the decisions that would affect our city, it was vital for me to have current and reliable information concerning the situation at the reactor site. The days of late March and early April were the most agonizing and frustrating that I have ever experienced. There was, of course, no communication with Met Ed, and communications with the state and federal governments were almost totally lacking as well. Without adequate and accurate factual information, it was virtually impossible to make satisfactory plans for city action.

Compounding the problem of inadequate links of communication was the clear impression that Met Ed and NRC were selectively withholding information from the public and local governments which was essential to our ability to provide leadership responsive to the circumstances.

Few people can appreciate the scope and depth of concern engendered by this incident. The general public was and is largely unaware of the inherent dangers of nuclear power. The threat was invisible, and people were upset, and thousands evacuated.

In the aftermath of the accident, as discussions of cleanup got underway, it became obvious that both Met Ed and NRC contemplated discharging the wastewater contaminated by the accident into the Susquehanna River after it had been processed. Much information continued to become available only through the news media. An already serious credibility gap with both Met Ed and NRC was widened even further by an attitude of "business as usual" and an almost casual, informal approach by NRC staff, and by its participation with Met Ed in developing cleanup plans.

The inaccuracies, inconsistencies and misinformation supplied by Met Ed and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission following the accident have been well documented and need not be reviewed here. However, the effect on the citizens of the Lancaster area has been a crisis of confidence concerning the ability of Met Ed and the NRC to protect the public.

Met Ed and the NRC have made repeated assurances that their post-accident procedures are more reliable, accurate and responsive to the public's need for reliable information. That conclusion, however, is open to serious challenge. For example, this sub-committee warned of the impending danger of an overflow in the storage tanks at Unit 1, and the NRC immediately issued assurances that the committee was "mistaken", and Richard Vollmer of NRC said that there was no need for concern since ample storage capacity existed at Unit No. 1. Yet, within less than one week, Mr. Vollmer and the NRC staff were urging the approval of Epicor II precisely because of the concern about

inadequate storage capacity. This is not an isolated example, but rather continues to be the rule.

Last week, NRC called in some fifty experts to analyze a reported problem in the cooling systems of all currently operating nuclear reactors. Subsequently this was termed an error. Also, numerous NRC spokesmen have vacillated and shown considerable indecisiveness in determining whether to continue licensing new reactors. While the long-term effects of this careful deliberation and scrutiny may be of considerable value, its immediate effect only serves to highlight the public's inability to rely upon positions advocated by the NRC.

Since Lancaster City provides a municipal water service for approximately 110,000 customers, city officials recognized the need to assure the integrity of its water supply. The Susquehanna River is the principal source of supply for the city. We draw and treat some 8 million gallons daily, from a point 8 miles downstream from Three Mile Island. We had to assure that the environmental impact of the cleanup would be carefully evaluated, for the area generally, and with particular awareness of the concern for the City of Lancaster's water source.

Because decisions were being made with no opportunity for Lancaster's participation, the City decided to file suit against the NRC in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia to compel compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act. Additionally, the City maintains that the NRC illegally approved

modifications to the reactor plant which altered the technical specifications previously incorporated in the construction permit and license, because the NRC did not issue a construction permit or amend the license pursuant to NRC regulations.

The salient facts recited in the City's complaint for injunctive relief form the basis for the City's request for an environmental impact statement governing all the plans to decontaminate and to dispose of radioactive wastewater. It seems clear that the public--those residents in the area directly affected by this nuclear accident, the national public and even the nuclear industry--will be served by a careful environmental impact statement. Caution dictates that there be broad review of all issues and technologies involved in the cleanup operations necessitated by the Three Mile Island accident. Any further problems at TMI will not only jeopardize the lives and health of the public, but also cloud the country's energy future. The public must be fully involved and informed so that it can be confident that reactor accidents are openly and properly analyzed and resolved. Some scientists claim that there are serious long-term hazards in the discharge of the decontaminated water into the Susquehanna River, while others maintain that discharge will present no significant risk. Since the scientific community is split on this issue, it is the City's position that the burden of proving that discharge would be safe must rest with Met Ed and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

In response to the City of Lancaster's suit, the NRC issued a statement and a consent order was subsequently entered by the Court.

The order requires a three part environmental assessment of the decontamination and disposal of the radioactively contaminated wastewater from the Three Mile Island facility. The NRC, along with Met Ed which has joined in the suit against the City, are seeking dismissal of our suit. It appears that both are still resistive to good tough public review of the cleanup operations.

The City's position is not one of total opposition to nuclear power. It is our belief that this country must continue to address and assess its energy problems, including nuclear, as expeditiously as possible, but it must be recognized that whatever decisions are made will have far reaching effects. Whatever lessons may be learned from Three Mile Island must be given fullest consideration in future planning for the nuclear power industry. Restoring public confidence in nuclear power and our governmental ability to safely control it, both in Lancaster County and elsewhere, will require more than public relations campaigns by Met Ed and the NRC.

Although some seven months have passed since the accident, Lancaster and the surrounding communities are reminded almost daily of the accident and the dangers surrounding nuclear power. A recent study done for the NRC by Mountain West Research, Inc. and Social Impact Research Inc. disclosed that:

(1) Within a 55 mile radius of TMI, 60% of all people responding to the survey felt that the effect of TMI would hurt the economy of the area.

(2) 71% of all pregnant women within the same radius are very concerned about the threat of TMI to their families.

(3) There is continuing concern about the cleanup activities at TMI; 41% of the respondents are still very concerned, and 34% are somewhat concerned.

These statistics suggest that the cleanup is having a profound social and psychological effect on the citizens of Lancaster.

It is my firm opinion that environmental impact assessments and environmental impact statements should be performed by consulting firms independent of Met Ed and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Additionally, there should be monitoring and on-site inspection by outside firms.

There must be a thorough and considered review of existing regulations and standards. Radioactive discharge standards for TMI established before the accident should not apply to TMI after the accident, because of the large releases of radioactivity and severe psychological stress inflicted on the people in the area. The only way to help those who live near TMI is to make TMI's discharge standards more restrictive. This is appropriate under NRC's own regulations, which require that the "as low as reasonably achievable" standards take into account economic and psychological considerations.

The federal government must assure a communication network capable of delivering to local governments information they must have to plan effectively for the safety and welfare of their communities.

Certainly this cannot involve communication on an individual level with each local unit of government, but there must be the capability for local governments to prepare for emergency situations without reliance upon the news media for information.

In conclusion, I think it is imperative that the NRC, or whatever agency oversees nuclear power, be capable of quickly delivering accurate information to local governments in areas affected by nuclear operations. Additionally, the NRC must concentrate on public safety, and not operate as a promoter of nuclear power in partnership with the utilities.

As for discharges from Three Mile Island, it is inconceivable to me that the uniqueness and magnitude of the danger would not dictate an environmental impact statement. The application of the National Environmental Policy Act should be clear. I cannot imagine circumstances more compelling than the cleanup operations at Three Mile Island.

The Lancaster community continues to be concerned by the Met Ed approach of designing and developing systems first, and then evaluating their environmental impact. Such an approach precludes an objective environmental or safety review. If the citizens of Lancaster cannot rely on and trust the NRC to protect our water supply, then who can we turn to?