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February 18, 1992

Mr. Shelly Cohen
Editorial Page Editor
The Boston Herald
One Herald Square
Boston, MA 02106

Dear Mr. Cohen:

The Herald's story of February 16, 1992, "NRC Boss: Staffers Told Congress Truth on Seabrook," needs some clarification.

The report of our Inspector General on welding issues at Seabrook Nuclear Station, released in redacted form on February 15, does not say anyone on the NRC staff lied to Congress or anyone else. It does say that some mistakes were made. They are being corrected, as pointed out in Chairman Ivan Selin's February 14 letter to members of Congress which was the basis for The Herald's story. The Chairman's letter, far from contradicting the IG report, agrees with it.

The Commission has noted that no one at NRC has deliberately misled, nor lied to, the Congress, the Commission or anyone else in this matter.

Sincerely,

Joseph J. Fouchard, Director
Office of Public Affairs

CONCUR

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NRC boss: Staffers told Congress truth on Seabrook

By RALPH RANALLI

US. Nuclear Regulatory Commission chairman Ivan Selin, in a letter released yesterday, contradicted an internal NRC report saying commission staffers lied to Congress about safety questions at the Seabrook nuclear power plant just before it was licensed in 1990.

The report, which surfaced late last month, had outraged the senators and representatives involved, including four members of the Massachusetts delegation. They had demanded an explanation from Selin before the NRC's appropriation hearing this Wednesday before a House subcommittee.

"We also share your expectation that no information which is conveyed to Congress by NRC will be accurate, complete and timely," Selin said in a letter to Rep. Peter Kostmayer (D-Pa.).

"However, no one at NRC has deliberately misled, nor lied to, the Congress, the Commission or anyone else in this matter," said Selin, who added that the agency was planning no disciplinary action against any staffers.

Among other problems, the report by the NRC's inspector general found that NRC staffers had no basis for statements to Congress that Seabrook's manager, Yankee Atomic Electric Co., had fully reviewed the X-rays of more than 2,500 safety welds.

But Selin said that such statements were due to problems with agency procedures and the fact that some staffers "made additional observations which were not justifiable on the basis of information available at the time."

Selin pledged to review some commission procedures to ensure the accuracy of information given to Congress. He also pledged to keep better track of which staffers are drafting documents so they can be held ac-

countable.

But two of the four legislators indicated yesterday that Selin's letter is inadequate, setting up a showdown on Capitol Hill at the hearing Wednesday.

"This continues to be a distressing chapter in the agency's candor in dealing with congress," said Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.). "The NRC needs to be held more accountable."

"It has clearly given short shrift to serious public concerns about the safety of the Seabrook Plant."

Rep. Edward Markey (D-Malden) also issued a statement saying the report still "raises serious questions about the integrity of the licensing process, when its decisions are being based on false information and lies." □