



OFFICE OF THE
COMMISSIONER

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

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May 29, 1984

The Honorable Morris K. Udall
Subcommittee on Energy and the Environment
Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D. C. 20515

Dear Mr. ^{Mo}Chairman:

I am writing to bring to your attention the Commission's disregard of its safety regulations in a case that closely parallels that of Shoreham, on which you held a hearing recently.

After that hearing, I asked our staff whether the Grand Gulf plant, which has had diesel problems similar to those of Shoreham, met the General Design Criterion on emergency power supplies. The written answer I received was that it did not but that the plant would be allowed to operate at low power in spite of this because of the staff's view that operation at low power posed essentially no risks. This is precisely the argument the Commission rejected in the more heavily publicized Shoreham case. There, the Commission made clear that any departure from the safety regulations on power supplies could only be made if the strict standards for a formal exemption were met.

The situation at Grand Gulf is aggravated by the staff's decision to authorize the plant to operate for a number of weeks while one of its diesel generators is dismantled for examination. Normally, the plant would be required to shutdown within 72 hours.

As I was out of town, I urged Chairman Palladino not to permit operation of the plant unless the Commission was prepared to find that an exemption was warranted. I was especially concerned because of numerous outstanding problems at the plant including the adequacy of the license conditions and the operating staff. The Chairman called a meeting on the subject last Thursday. The Commission approved the staff's course, thereby abandoning the position it had taken in the Shoreham case. Commissioner Asselstine dissented.

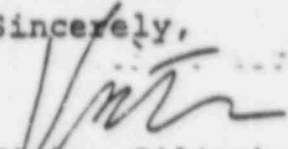
During the meeting, the staff argued, in effect, that a failure to comply with basic safety regulations did not in

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itself require shutdown of a plant so long as the staff's seat-of-the-pants judgment was that the public was adequately protected. So much for having a predictable system of regulations.

These events are symptomatic of what has been going on at the Commission. It is essential that Congress maintain close oversight of NRC's activities to keep the system of safety regulations from unraveling.

Sincerely,



Victor Gilinsky
Commissioner

cc: Rep. Manuel Lujan