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The Tom Paine Institute

1155 South Dora Street, Ukiah, California 95482 (707) 462-5648

Jan. 12, 1984

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Victor Galinsky
c/o Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Docketing and Servicing Department
Washington D.C. 20555

Re: licensing of Diablo Canyon
nuclear power plant

Dear Mr. Galinsky:

On Friday, January 13, there will be rituals held in San Luis Obispo, Ukiah, and many other places in California all expressing the hope and the prayer that you will envision accurately the effects of a decision not to license operation of the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant and the effects if the plant is licensed.

This letter has much the same purpose. We hope you will feel, in very personal ways, the effects of a decision one way or another.

We realize that you face genuine dilemmas; for instance, that there are sincere individuals in government and private industry who have worked for years to get the plant to its present state for whom a negative vote would seem a personal tragedy and that energy sources other than fossil fuels must be found. However, to us the hazards of nuclear radiation are so great that, it there were no other arguments against the plant, they would be sufficient. Therefore, in this letter we concentrate on them.

If you were to vote for licensing, you would be adding to the unsolved problem of how to cope with the radioactive waste and you would be approving of a nuclear reactor in an area very likely to be struck by an earthquake.

We all know that radioactive materials do get back into the environment with present methods of waste storage, that there is a danger of this happening every time they are transported, and that there could be massive contamination from an earthquake or from reactor failure.

We know that the effects of radiation on humans are

From the desks of Alfred F. Andersen and Dorothy Norvell Andersen, Co-directors

Life can be good. For some of us it is even now very good: pleasant, exciting, and envigorating, with dramatic adventures beckoning and the means to pursue them.

But for hundreds of millions of persons on spaceship earth, with just as much inalienable right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" as you and I, life is misery, starvation, and short and, despite recent efforts, getting worse!

Why is this? How can those running the world, themselves in comfort and abundance, permit such unjust tragedy? Have they no moral sense? No compassion? Are they entirely driven by lust for power and for the pleasures which power brings?

Some are, no doubt. But mostly they are so insulated by their specialized and sheltered lifestyles that their moral senses don't get feedback as to how their actions are harming others, or as to how changing their lifestyles could make any lasting difference, especially when they contemplate the personal sacrifices which might accompany such changes.

The concern for "lasting" difference is a valid one, for, despite many sincere efforts in the past, the poor get poorer.

This is why the final official statement by NGOs (non-governmental organizations) meeting at Habitat Forum 1976 emphasized the following:

"We consider that these problems can only be solved by a global and integral approach which has to go to the heart of the matter and transform the economic, social, and political structures which caused them, at both the national and international levels."

This sentence points to the basic dialogue which now needs to take place. The inequities themselves were vividly acknowledged at Habitat Forum. What we need now is compassionate world discussion about what changes in power structures are needed to assure humane alternatives.

We need viable humane alternatives to both "capitalism" and "communism." We need a joining of intellect and conscience in forming a world community consciousness and a genuinely humane civilization on this limited but very beautiful earth!

cancer including leukemia, birth defects of all kinds including mental retardation, and death.

You hold the awesome power of deciding whether to increase or decrease these dangers.

Please imagine the results of your decision in personal terms. Would you offer one of your own children or grandchildren to become a leukemia victim or to be born mentally retarded? Then realize that it you vote to increase the hazards of nuclear radiation, you are deciding that some people, who care as much as you do, will suffer these unnecessary tragedies.

To turn to the hopeful vision--if you say "no" to the license then, first, money that would have gone to Diablo can go to wind, solar, and other safe renewable energy projects and to energy conservation, and, secondly, people throughout California and the world will feel a great sense of gratitude and relief that this threat of nuclear radiation has been lessened, and third and most important, individuals in the future will be whole and healthy because of your decision. Whether they will realize their debt to you, who can say? We feel sure that God will know--and you will know.

Sincerely,

Dorothy Norvell Andersen

Dorothy Norvell Andersen

Alfred F. Andersen

Alfred F. Andersen

P. S. We're enclosing an article with which you may or may not be familiar, a summary of Dr. Ernest Sternglass' paper "Infant Mortality Changes Following the Three Mile Island Accident". It is one of many sources which have convinced us of the seriousness of radiation hazards from nuclear power plants.

The Human Consequences of the Accident at Three Mile Island

Last Friday marked the first anniversary of the accident at Three Mile Island. One year later, the TMI containment is still filled with radioactive water and gases. Metropolitan Edison, the plant owner, has proposed "cleanup" procedures which amount to little more than releasing the trapped wastes into the environment. Recently the NRC has suggested that they may permit these releases without waiting for completion of an environmental impact statement. Not surprisingly, these plans have been angrily criticized by area residents.

The recent anniversary and impending new releases make this a good time to review the known health effects of the TMI accident. The Kemeny Commission suggested that there were no immediate health effects attributable to the radioactive releases last spring. They concluded that the accident-related increase in latent cancers would be undetectable and that psychological stress among workers and those living in the area was the only significant effect.

A recent study by Dr. Ernest J. Sternglass of the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine calls this conclusion seriously into question. Sternglass focuses his attention on infant mortality records collected from area hospitals and the U.S. Monthly Vital Statistics. Early records indicate a significant increase in infant deaths in areas downwind from TMI during the three months following the accident.

The summer is normally a period of low infant mortality due to lower risk of pneumonia and influenza. In the summer of 1979 however, the infant mortality rate in Pennsylvania rose from a level of 10.4 per thousand in March to a peak of 18.5 in July. In August, mortality levels returned to a more typical level of 8.5 per thousand. This represents a rise from 141 to 271 deaths per month between March and July-- corresponding to an increase of more than five standard deviations. The probability that this is a purely statistical fluctuation is much less than 1 in 1000.

During the same period, infant mortality in the U.S. as a whole continued to decline. Areas to the south and east of TMI, not in the path of the radioactive gas plume, also experienced no increases in infant deaths. Sternglass estimates that during the period of May through July 1979, 552 "excess" deaths occurred in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and New York (or 427 from April to July). He also predicts increases in the rates of leukemia and childhood cancers within the next decade. Finally, Sternglass concludes, "the Three Mile Island accident has now demonstrated that [illegible] an industrial accident, with total releases [illegible] to reach many thousands over the next 10 to 40 years."

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Sternglass' conclusions are not without precedent, and are supported by previous scientific studies. Similar increases in the rates of infant mortality were observed following atmospheric nuclear weapons tests in the fifties and sixties. These effects were not immediately recognized because the radiation doses were then thought to be too small to cause damage. More recent studies on the correlation between infant mortality and X-ray exposure during pregnancy have further demonstrated the extreme sensitivity of the developing fetus to low level radiation. The fetal thyroid, where radioactive Iodine-131 concentrates, is critical to development and maturation during the final months of pregnancy. Thus, the fetal thyroids of infants born between April and July would have been active and very sensitive to radiation at the time of the TMI accident. Babies born after July of 1979 did not have active thyroid glands at the time of the accident -- hence the sharp drop in mortality during August.

✓ Sternglass goes on further to point out that for each infant who was harmed by radioactivity seriously enough to die, many more suffered lesser damage, possibly leading to mental retardation or abnormal growth patterns. The number of infants and young people affected may reach well into the thousands. This is a sobering thought when one recalls that the TMI releases were small -- especially in comparison to the amount of radioactive materials still trapped within the reactor containment.

Finally, Sternglass presents evidence demonstrating that even the low-level radiation released by nuclear power plants as a part of their "normal functioning" may not be as safe as NRC experts claim, and may in fact produce seriously harmful effects. During the late sixties, Rhode Island's infant mortality rate was decreasing at a rate comparable to the rest of the United States, until 1970, when the Millstone nuclear plant was opened in eastern Connecticut, about 30 miles upwind of Rhode Island. The plant has regularly released several million curies of radiation per year since being put on-line. Meanwhile, Rhode Island's mortality rate stopped falling and has remained nearly constant between 1970 and 1978 at about 19 deaths per 1000 live births. During the same time period, though, nuclear-free New Hampshire's infant mortality rate decreased by half, from about 18 to 9.3 per 1000 live births. Furthermore, periodic increases or decreases in the mortality rate in Rhode Island correspond extremely well with the varying amounts of radiation released by the Millstone plant. And in the Connecticut towns nearest the plant, infant mortality has increased dramatically, with the effects concentrically decreasing in areas further from the plant.

((This is a summary of Dr. Sternglass' paper "Infant Mortality Changes Following the Three Mile Island Accident", presented at the 5th World Congress of Engineers and Architects in Tel-Aviv on January 25, 1980. Summary prepared by members of PANE -- Peace Action Against a Nuclear Society, 4400 Fair Oaks, Menlo Park, CA, 940[illegible]

(415) 447-9544/322-2759