

THREE MILE ISLAND

ALERT

December
1988

315 Peffer Street; Harrisburg, PA 17102

TELEPHONE: 717-233-3072

Oral Arguments Heard in Husted Case

The U.S. Third Circuit Court of Appeals heard oral arguments in TMIA's appeal of a decision of the Atomic Safety and Licensing Appeal Board which reversed an Administrative Law Judge and permitted Husted to work as a supervisor of non-licensed operators at Three Mile Island. Husted had been barred from training or supervising the operators because he had attempted to cheat on a licensing test and refused to cooperate into an NRC investigation into cheating on the Island.

TMIA intervenor Louise Bradford and attorney Debra Wallet of Blank and Wallet are handling the case for TMIA. Wallet, according to TMIA Planning Council Member attorney Tom Bailey, presented an excellent oral argument before the three judge panel. Presenting testimony against the TMIA position were attorneys from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and GPU Nuclear. A ruling is expected early next year.

Executive Order Clears Way for Swifter Licensing

Less than two weeks after George Bush captured the White House, Ronald Reagan penned his name to a four-page executive order which authorizes federal officials to prepare, coordinate and contribute federal resources to evacuation plans for nuclear plants where local and state governments have refused to cooperate with utility efforts, thereby blocking licensing and operation.

Under the order, utilities must certify to the Federal Emergency Management Agency that state and/or local governments are refusing to participate in emergency planning. Then FEMA would develop its own plan, which will assume state and local governments will cooperate fully during emergencies. Interestingly, under the order FEMA is required to review and evaluate its plans as though they were submitted by local government, serving as judge and jury for its own creations.

The Safe Energy Communication Council, a coalition of 13 environmental groups led by the Sierra Club, said the order will help "a new generation of nuclear power plants that can come on line with no public oversight." Others view the order as a preview of what's coming, as the Department of Energy is pushing hard for the elimination of evacuation plans as a consideration for the licensing of so-called "advanced" reactors. The DOE believes that advanced reactors are so safe that neither containments nor emergency plans are necessary.

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Though discussed for months prior to the election, the White House delayed the order fearing the Gov. Michael Dukakis would use the order as a campaign issue. "Why stir up an issue before the election?" asked one White House aide .

After years of calling for less federal meddling in local affairs, the hypocrisy of the Reagan administration's action was smoothed over by Asst. Attorney General Douglas Kmiec who said the order is in harmony with the Disaster Relief Act of 1974 (which apparently now covers disasters waiting to happen): "The statute indicates that the states should be allowed, whenever possible, to carry out their traditional roles, with the Federal Government stepping in only as a last resort."

Renewed Effort on Whistleblower Protection Planned

The outrage generated over President Reagan's pocket veto of the Whistleblower Protection Act of 1988—after assurances of administrative support—practically guarantees new whistleblower protection legislation will be introduced early in the 101st Congress. Last year's bill, which was supported by TMIA, passed with strong bipartisan support (418-0 in the House and by unanimous consent in the Senate), but died on President Reagan's desk after Congress adjourned.

The 1988 legislation would have placed meaningful guarantees on the free speech rights of federal employees who demonstrate their determination to be public servants, instead of bureaucrats. The Government Accountability Project and other supporters of the whistleblower bill are urging Congress to symbolically prove its support for new legislation by introducing it as House Resolution 1 or Senate Bill 1 and to schedule votes early in the session.

Supporters of the legislation are urged to write their representatives in Congress, President-elect Bush, House Speaker James Wright, Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, and legislators whose efforts will be key in determining the new bill's success including, Rep. Patricia Schroeder, Chair of the House Subcommittee on Civil Service (c/o U.S. House, Washington, D.C. 20515; Sen. Carl Levin, Chair of the Senate Gov. Affairs Subcommittee; Sen. David Pryor, Chair of the Sen. Gov. Affairs Committee on Civil Service; and Sen. John Glenn, Chair of the Sen. Gov. Affairs Committee (all U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510).

Outlook Rosy for GPU Nuclear

The embarrassment of the nuclear industry less than a decade ago, GPU was named "Electric Utility of the Year" for 1988 by *Electric Light and Power Magazine*. The company, the first holding company ever selected for the award, got the nod on the basis of its recovery from the accident and strong financial performance during 1987 and 1988. The company's third quarter report for 1988 showed an 8.6% increase in the sale of electricity; a common stock dividend of 45 cents per share was paid (the second quarter dividend was 30 cents per share); and the company has received permission from the Security and Exchange Commission to buy up to eight million of its shares on the open market. The company is particularly interested in buying up their "odd-lot" shares, those held by people with fewer than 100 shares of the utility's stock—some of whom have the nerve to show up at stockholder meetings to ask embarrassing questions.

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Peaceful Atoms May Find Their Way Into Warheads

With three nuclear reactors shut down at its Savannah River Plant in South Carolina, the federal government is looking for new sources of tritium and plutonium, needed for the production of nuclear weapons. On November 18 President Reagan signed an executive order calling for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to draw up detailed plans for dealing with a national security emergency, including plans to seize civilian nuclear power plants.

The international community may find the proposal alarming, particularly since the United States has consistently called for clear delineation between civilian and military uses of nuclear technology. The U.S. is a signatory to the 1968 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty which included strongly worded provisions against the use of civilian nuclear industries for military purposes.

Considering the controversy surrounding the siting of a permanent nuclear waste dump—and the disposal of plutonium, tritium and other by-products of commercial nuclear reactors—don't be surprised if there's a sudden push by the government to suspend the licenses of civilian reactors to gain the "special nuclear materials" for use in nuclear weapons. Paul Leventhal, president of the Nuclear Control Institute, suspects the government may be advancing the argument that, "For economy reasons the government may be saying it would be more convenient to use nuclear power plants for weapon materials instead of building new ones or fixing up the old ones."

The tritium now on Three Mile Island that GPU is now looking to release into the air by boiling the water left over from the clean-up must look quite attractive to Department of Defense types who probably hate to see the gas, used in the production of nuclear warheads, go to waste irradiating central Pennsylvanians when it could be in the nuclear stockpile.

Americans Oppose Nuclear Power Development

A new public opinion poll has found that a clear majority of the American public—59 percent—oppose any further nuclear power development. The poll, conducted by the Analysis Group for the Safe Energy Communication Council, found opposition to nuclear power across every imaginable line: race, sex, age, political party, and geography. For example, Republicans oppose building more reactors by a 51-46% margin; Democrats by a 64-30% margin; independents by a 61-33% margin. New Englanders were the most ardent opponents with a 70-26% anti-nuclear edge.

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The **1989 Peace Calendar** is now available at the TMIA office. The 18th edition, **Carry It On**, is an artistic celebration of people's work for justice around the world. Price, only \$8.95. They make stunning gifts for birthday, wedding, Christmas and Hanukkah.

A new bumper sticker **NO EVAPORATION AT TMI** is now available at the TMIA office. Send your dollar and we'll send you a bumper sticker—red lettering a yellow background.

New 10th Anniversary tee-shirts will be available for Christmas giving. Do some Christmas Shopping at the TMIA Office—Call 233-7897 for gift giving advice.

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January 9	7:30 p.m. TMIA Planning Council Meeting, Harrisburg Friends Meeting House, 6th & Herr Streets
January 31	6:30 PM Pot-luck meal, Friends Meeting House
January 31	7:30 PM TMIA General Membership Meeting, Friends Meeting House, 6th & Herr Streets, Harrisburg

Accident Effect on Fetuses Small According to State Health Study

The Pennsylvania Department of Health reports that women who took extra medication to cope with stress during the early days of the TMI accident were more likely to have children with low birth weights. Women pregnant at the time were also found to be more likely to say that their children's health was not as good as that of children born two years later.

Dr. George Tokuhata, director of the Health Department's Division of Epidemiology Research and its TMI Health Research Program, presented the findings in mid-November at the annual convention of the American Public Health Association in Boston. Of the 4,000 pregnant women studied, 19 percent said they were extremely disturbed by the accident and 4 percent of them took extra medication, such as tranquilizers or sleeping pills. Of these, 12 percent had babies of low birth weight, compared to six percent of the women who did not take medication. Dr. Tokuhata said he wasn't surprised by the findings since extra medication taken during pregnancy can affect fetuses.

GPU Wants to Remove Monitors

GPU Nuclear has proposed removing Dauphin County's only link to radiation monitoring at TMI, the Reuter-Stokes monitoring system. The monitors, which were installed at TMI eight years ago, provide instant readings of radiation levels from 16 stations located on and around the island, and Dauphin County has a printer in its Emergency Management Agency office that records the readings.

Deborah Davenport, a member of Concerned Mothers and Women who regularly reads the printouts at the Dauphin County Emergency Management office for TMIA, argued that the system be kept in place "as its the only real-time monitor left," she said. A real-time monitor gives instant readings of the radiation levels.

At a November 30 meeting, Davenport raised concerns about high readings recorded this summer, which GPU said were due to excessive heat and humidity. GPU's manager of environmental controls, Gary Baker, said the company does not rely on the Reuter-Stokes monitors for information, but relies instead on other real-time monitors inside the plant that would give the initial notice of high radiation readings.

The county, which pays \$3,000 to \$5,000 per year to maintain a dedicated phone line to receive the Reuter-Stokes data, has no other source for instant information.

Idaho, Land of Potatoes and TMI's Debris

The more than 300,000 pounds of highly radioactive debris from TMI's melted core are being moved more than 2700 miles by rail across ten states for temporary storage at the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory (INEL). In this travel, the cargo comes within a half mile of more than a million people, but the Department of Energy has assured the public that the shipments are "safe, secure, and well monitored."

From July 20, 1986 through last June, there have been 16 shipments. The most recent shipments contained 30,000 pounds of radioactive debris in three casks. The last shipment has been scheduled for next year.

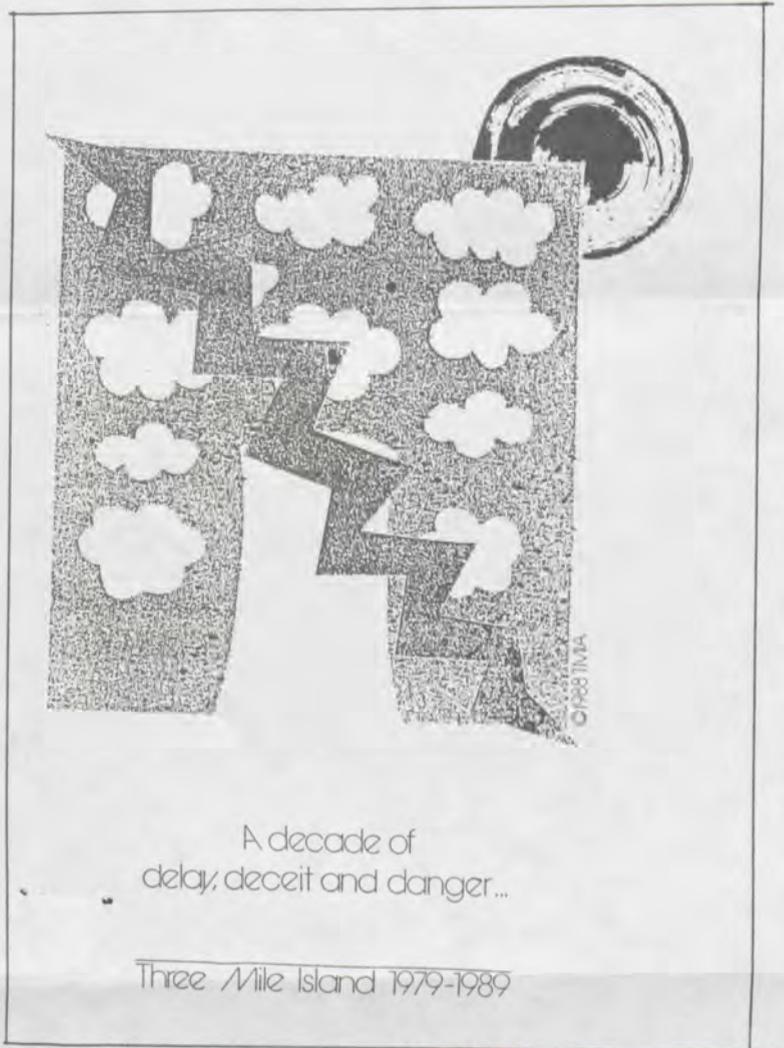
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