

THREE MILE ISLAND

ALERT

DECEMBER
1989

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315 Peffer Street; Harrisburg, PA 17102

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Ruling Due on Evaporation Appeal

As this newsletter went to press (Nov. 27) the Department of Environmental Resources was expected to issue its ruling on TMIA and SVA's appeal of the state's decision not to require a clean air permit for GPU's evaporation of radiation-laced water from the TMI accident. Frances Skolnick, who represented TMIA and SVA, asked that DER's Environmental Hearing Board block the evaporation of the 2.3 million gallons of radioactive water sitting at the plant. We also had expert witnesses—scientists and engineers—appearing in support of our position.

Though you've read this here before: TMIA Needs Money. Please send some to help pay for the expenses of the expert witnesses who testified. Send your money to TMIA.

Baker Elected TMIA Chairperson

Deborah Baker was elected TMIA Chairperson at the membership meeting held September 28, 1989 at the Harrisburg Friends Meetinghouse. Vera Stuchinski, who served as Chairperson for four years, was recognized for her long-term commitment to the organization. Vera was elected to serve on the Planning Council along with Bill Cologie, Cherie Friedrich, Eric Epstein, Kay Pickering and Dan Welliver. Randy Smedley agreed to continue serving as TMI Legal Fund representative and Betsy-Robinson was re-elected Treasurer.

NRC Proposes Deregulating Radioactive Waste

Radioactive waste may soon be joining old tires, banana peels and other household garbage at our local mass burn incinerator and finding its way into Mt. Ashmore or up the incinerator's chimney. Thanks to a proposal from the NRC and the Environmental Protection Agency, the government may soon be establishing a range of radiation exposure below which no regulation is needed—Below Regulatory Concern (BRC). The generators of radioactive wastes (such as hospitals, power plants and some manufacturers) have asked the NRC to agree that some of their waste is below this range and is "safe" for regular dumping.

The nuclear industry believes that such a move will save it hundreds of millions of dollars in handling costs if the BRC is implemented. Instead of packing radioactive wastes for shipment to repositories where it would be stored and monitored, such wastes could be disposed of in municipal incinerators or public landfills, thereby saving the cost of transportation and storage.

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National safe energy groups such as the Nuclear Information and Resource Service (NIRS) are monitoring developments on BRC. NIRS has produced an informative brochure (available from TMIA) which lists what should be done at the grassroots. Several Maine communities have already passed resolutions requiring that all radioactive waste go to licensed radioactive waste facilities and letters to members of Congress are in order.

TMIA Co-Releases Report on Radioactive Waste

In a report co-released by TMIA and Public Citizen in September entitled **Nuclear Legacy: An Overview of the Problems and Politics of Radioactive Wastes in the United States**, Peach Bottom was identified as hosting one of the largest irradiated fuel pool inventories in the nation. Peach Bottom-2 was ranked seventh and Peach Bottom-3 was ranked eighth. The combined volume of irradiated fuel being stored at Peach Bottom is 299.8 cubic meters. Three Mile Unit-1 was ranked 56 by volume, with 53.2 cubic meters of waste stored on site. The material stored in these pools is classified as high-level reactor waste.

Worker Inattentiveness Issue Referred to Justice Dept.

by Eric Epstein

Dr. Michael Masnik reported to the TMI Advisory Panel on Sept. 21 that the NRC Office of Investigations report on the subject of management involvement in the inattentiveness issue at TMI-2 has been referred to the Justice Department and is under evaluation at this time. Masnik acknowledged that the staff believes that there is "wrongdoing" on the part of GPU.

This issue initially caught media attention on December 1, 1987 when GPU fired a shift supervisor for sleeping on the job. Although the employee had a record of sleeping on the job beginning in the early '80s, GPU did not issue a warning until October 1986. Edwin Stier, former director of the New Jersey Division of Criminal Justice, reported that 21 witnesses saw the shift supervisor asleep on the job. In addition, this individual wandered around the plant out of contact of the control room, incorrectly briefed incoming shifts on the status of the plant, and read non-work related material in the control room.

Stier concluded his investigation on July 20, 1988. His report "...revealed inadequacies in management response to the allegations that the shift supervisor slept or was otherwise inattentive to duties. These inadequacies led to inaccurate or distorted information reported to higher levels of TMI-2 and other GPU Nuclear management and to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission" (GPU Nuclear, News Release, July 20, 1988).

TMI Workers Exposed to Highly Radioactive Fuel

by Eric Epstein

A special meeting was called by the NRC to investigate two potential violations relating to a worker exposure incident that occurred on September 25, 1989.

One violation was related to radiation exposure. One of the two cleanup workers involved in the incident may have received as much as 220 rems of exposure to the hands. (The other worker is believed to have received approximately 35 rems.) The workers picked up an object they thought was a "nut" or "bolt," but was in fact a piece of highly radioactive nuclear fuel. The workers were then advised to throw the "object into the reactor vessel." Since the fuel was discarded and the utility had to use models to predict dose calculations and exposure rates, the NRC believes these predictions should be "refined." In addition, cleanup workers are reporting contradictory statements about the event.

The other violation stems from GPU's delay in reporting the incident. NRC guidelines required GPU to report the exposures within 24-hours. GPU did not officially report the incident until October 6, 1989, 12 days after the workers were contaminated.

Massive Sea Kill at San Onofre Nuclear Power Plant

by Eric Epstein

The Marine Review Committee, which was established in 1974 as a operating condition for San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station (SONGS) Units 2 and 3, has "documented massive

fish kills and other sea life destruction caused by operations at Southern California Edison's San Onofre Facility..." (The Nuclear Monitor October 30, 1989.)

Among the key findings released in the final report:

- "Each year SONGS "takes in 45 tons of fish and kills at least 21 tons. This estimate was made in a period of depressed fish abundance, and over the long term the amount killed will be about 56 tons per year."
- "The local abundance of queenfish has been reduced by between 30% and 70%."
- "Fish living near the bottom of the kelp bed "have been reduced by about 70%."

Rad-Readers Monitoring Radiation Around TMI

by Deb Baker

It has been ten years since the accident at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant began. I don't think there is one person living in our area who was not affected in some way. I think the question on most people's minds is: How much radiation was really released and where did it go?

We may never know the answer to this question. We have only been given an estimate by the utility and we are to accept their amount as fact. Do you believe them based on past history?

Now there is a way to detect a leak or an uncontrolled release the very minute it happens. It is a monitor known as the Radalert. This unit gives you, via a gieger counter, an up to the minute reading of the levels of radiation in your area. It measures alpha, beta, gamma and X-ray radiation.

The unit works by a 9 volt battery or can be used with an adapter. Anybody can operate the Radalert with confidence and ease. With the unit you will know what exceeds background levels. The unit will give you a per minute reading or can be set for continuous total count for up to 12 hours. The unit will alarm when it exceeds background levels. The digital LCD display will allow you to read the precise amount of ionizing radiation. The unit has an easy conversion chart to allow you to see how many mr/hr (milirems per hour) of Cesium 137 and Cobalt 60.

Our group known as the Rad-Readers have three of these monitors in operation. We are looking forward to having 30 monitors in operation within a 10 mile radius or more encompassing every direction of the plant. We have already established background radiation reading levels for all areas within a five mile radius and are now working out to ten miles. We are not the first group in the United States to use these monitors. There is a group in Massachusetts and one in Maine. They are very successful in their efforts to keeping their respective utilities under control and accounting for what is released. This unit comes highly recommended by Dr. John Gofman, a professional in the field of radiation.

On Dec. 16, 1989 we will be holding a Bake Sale at the Point Shopping Center. We will also be demonstrating the monitor. Please drop by to see them and feel free to select an assortment of goodies. All proceeds will go to purchase more monitors. For more information, please contact Debbie Davenport at 763-9552 or Debbie Baker at 566-7466.

Stello's Record Catches Up With Him

The man you love to hate, Victor Stello, Jr., is having a rough go on Capitol Hill as the Senate is reviewing his fitness to serve as George ("The Environmental President") Bush's nominee as Asst. Sec'y. of Defense Programs at the Department of Energy—in other words, the man responsible for cleaning up the mess at the DOE's bomb factories. Included among the testimony against Stello's getting this position was this from Bob Pollard of the Union of Concerned Scientists:

"I worked for him at the NRC. He was my supervisor, though never my superior. He is the individual most responsible for the American people being anti-nuclear. He consistently blocked safety moves by the staff, he blocked criminal investigations. There is no individual more unsuited for this assignment."

During his tenure at the NRC, charged with regulating the commercial nuclear industry, Stello has instead repeatedly protected their interests rather than the public. His actions have been investigated and criticized by several House and Senate committees. Among the subjects of these investigations were: attempts to conceal the falsification of leak testing which took place at TMI; pressuring the Federal Emergency Management Agency to change its conclusion that the emergency plans for protecting the public in the event of an accident at Seabrook were inadequate; directing an NRC attorney to write an "interpretation of NRC's regulations for fire protection at nuclear plants that would satisfy the utilities—after they lost a lawsuit seeking to overturn the new fire protection requirements which NRC adopted following the fire at the Browns Ferry nuclear plant; and, advising a TVA official not to provide a definitive answer to the NRC's questions on whether there had been a total breakdown in the quality of construction underway at the Watts Bay nuclear plant.

Rep. John Dingell (D-Michigan), in a letter to the Senate Armed Services Committee which is considering Mr. Stello's nomination, said that "the only benefit of moving Mr. Stello to the Department of Energy is ridding the NRC of Mr. Stello." It isn't too late for you to get your two cents in. Write The Honorable John Heinz or The Honorable Arlen Specter, U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510

1990 Peace Calendar Available

The 1990 Peace Calendar, "Carry It On," from the Syracuse Cultural Workers is available at the TMIA office. The front cover features the "Peace Crane" or paper crane. The full-color calendar includes historical dates as well as lunar cycles and holidays. The 11 x 14 inch calendar (folded) is only \$10 and your purchase benefits TMIA. Themes include Black culture, Latin America, daily life, common work, gay pride, a New World map, Native American visions, human rights struggles, the environment and animals.

TMIA t-shirts, buttons and posters are still available including many items featuring the 10th anniversary's "decade of delay, deceit and danger" theme. Stop by TMIA for your holiday shopping. Shirts \$8.00 (sizes med., large and X-large available), posters are \$2.00, buttons are \$.50 and the anniversary commemorative book is now a mere \$1.00. Stop by, call (233-7897) the office, or mail your order with check to TMIA, 315 Peffer Street, Harrisburg, PA 17102.

CALENDAR CALENDAR CALENDAR CALENDAR

The TMIA Advisory Panel will meet in December or January. Call the TMIA office for details (233-7897).

December 16 Christmas Peace Pilgrimage, 11:30 a.m. - 7:30 p.m. A 10-mile walk from Nazareth to Bethlehem, PA. Includes: speaker, hot beverages, rest stops and a simple meal at the YWCA. Detailed flyers available from the TMIA office (233-7897).

December 31 New Year's Eve Party! Rescue Fire House on N. 6th Street. "From 9PM 'til the '90s." See enclosed flyer.

Your contributions to help defer the costs of the expert witnesses and other MASSIVE legal expenses incurred during the fight to stop the evaporation is needed. Please give.

Please renew your membership, then give more to support TMIA activities

Name _____ **Phone** _____

Address _____ **ZIP** _____

Intervention Fund Contribution: \$10 \$20 \$50 \$100 MORE (Checks in the amount of \$50 or more can be made payable to the TMI Legal Fund for tax deduction purposes.)

Membership: _____ \$15 Regular Members _____ \$50 Sustaining Membership
_____ \$25 Non-Profit Organization _____ \$100 Patron
_____ \$5 Low Income/Student _____ \$200 Club Member
_____ \$5 Non-member newsletter subscription

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN TO TMIA, 315 Peffer Street, Harrisburg, PA 17102

START THE NEW DECADE RIGHT!
NEW YEAR'S EVE PARTY

DATE: Sunday, Dec. 31

TIME: 9 P.M. Till The 90's
(And Beyond !!)

PLACE: RESCUE FIRE HOUSE
(Near Sisco's Pizza on 6th Street
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