

THREE MILE ISLAND

ALERT

August
1994

315 Peffer Street, Harrisburg, PA 17102-1834

Telephone: 717/233-7897 FAX:717/233-3261

Commonwealth Court Reverses PUC Ruling on Decommissioning Costs

In a 7-0 vote, Commonwealth Court reversed the Public Utility Commission's April, 1993 decision that Metropolitan Edison ratepayers would have to pay the company's share of decommissioning Unit 2. Commonwealth Court said ratepayers cannot be charged, saving customers \$8.3 million a year. The ruling will mean a one percent reduction in the bills of Met Ed ratepayers.

The PUC had voted 2-1 in favor of having consumers pay these costs. Commissioner Joseph Rhodes who provided the only vote against, said, "I am pleased that my position was vindicated." PUC Chairman David Rolka, who was expected to side with Rhodes in the initial vote, had shocked consumers by siding with the utility.

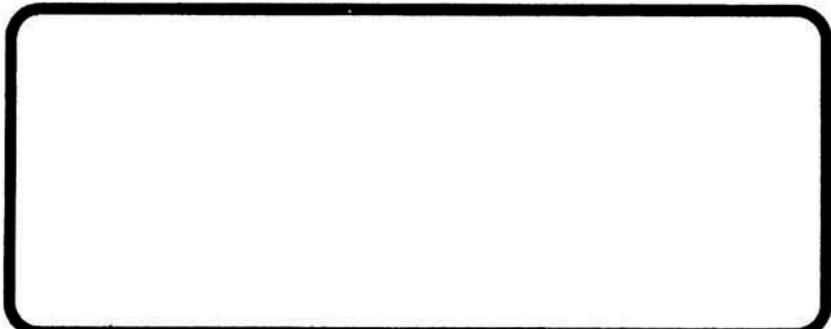
Consumer Advocate Irwin Popowski, who filed the appeal of the PUC ruling, welcomed the court's ruling. "I think it's a major victory for ratepayers, and I think it's important that Commonwealth Court establish this position . . . that ratepayers will not pay these costs for useless facilities."

Bonnie Raitt Wows Central Pennsylvania

More than 6,000 satisfied fans enjoyed the music, wit and charm of Bonnie Raitt and the virtuoso keyboard performance of Bruce Hornsby during a magnificent evening at Hershey Stadium on Sunday, July 24. Raitt, who attended a benefit reception for Three Mile Island Alert after the concert, was as gracious as could be, chatting and posing for photos with the dozens of fans in attendance. "Though I get a lot of attention for what I do," Raitt told the crowd at the reception, "it is those of you who support groups like TMIA with your time, money and energy that are making a meaningful difference in the lives of real people." TMIA Chairperson Gene Stilp, who played a major role in organizing the event, complimented Raitt on her long alliance with the safe energy movement and thanked her for helping TMIA raise funds as it prepares for battle over the disposal of nuclear wastes.

TMIA Questions Candidates on Nuclear Issues

TMIA has requested a meeting with the state's gubernatorial candidates and the enclosed questionnaire was sent to both Mark Singel and Tom Ridge, as well as to U.S. Senate candidate, Senator Harris Wofford and Congressman Rick Santorum. TMIA will publicize the responses to its members prior to November's general election. The reverse side of the questionnaire included with this edition of *Alert*, lists some of the concerns TMIA holds concerning the siting of the so-called "low level" radioactive waste storage facility in Pennsylvania.



IMMEDIATELY
OPEN

Questionnaire Enclosed
Election '94

Three Mile Island Alert
315 Peffer Street
Harrisburg, PA 17102

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Harrisburg, PA
Permit No. 807

YOUR DUES PAYMENT
A RED X INDICATES
Collection by the Foundation
IS REQUESTED
Digitized 2018

Rusty Fuel Rods a Problem at TMI Unit 1

Once again rust on the fuel rods are slowing the positioning of the rods into the reactor, having an adverse impact on reactor safety. The rods, which are supposed to move into position in 1.6 seconds, take a full 2.2 seconds to get positioned correctly. That's almost 40 percent too much time, with each fraction of a second critical to keeping the reactor under control. The plant was shut down twice this spring to correct the problem, with the rust being scraped from the rods and the reactor water being treated to make it less corrosive. The problem, according to TMIA's Eric Epstein, is not at all unusual for a 20 year-old reactor. "I think you can anticipate that these problems will be more frequent because of its age," Epstein said.

Specter, Wofford Vote to Kill Breeder Reactor Program

Senator Harris Wofford voted as expected, but Sen. Arlen Specter departed from his previous support for the breeder reactor program to vote against funding the program for another year. Unfortunately, the final vote was 52-46 in favor of continuing funding for the program. Although safe energy activists turned around six votes (including Specter's) from the last time the program was considered, four Senators previously opposed to the program switched their votes. Those bolting were Sens. Robert Byrd (D-WV), John Chafee (R-RI), Ernest Hollings (D-SC) and Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii).

TMIA Planning Council Chairman Gene Stilp and a dozen TMIA members were on their way to Washington for a meeting with a key Specter aide when mechanical trouble with their rented van kept them from arriving. Stilp apparently did enough lobbying via a roadside pay phone to win Sen. Specter's support on this key vote.

Epstein Speaks at Workshop on Radioactive Scrap Metal

TMIA Planning Council Member Eric Epstein spoke at a July 12-14 workshop on radioactive scrap metal at the University of Tennessee. Epstein reminded the conferees, primarily from industry and government, of the importance of involving citizens, environmentalists, workers, and consumers in the making of policy related to the shipping, handling and recycling of irradiated scrap metal. He urged the conference, the second in a series held to discuss the anticipated mushrooming of such wastes as nuclear power plants are decommissioned, to shift their focus to put health effects and consumer concerns on the same level as the economics of disposal.

New Members Elected to Planning Council

TMIA got some new blood in leadership positions, adding Mike Horgan, Rick Kushner, Jerry Schultz, Eric Epstein and Lauren Taylor to the Planning Council. Re-elected to Council were Betsy Robinson, Deborah Baker, Vera Stuchinski, Kay Pickering, Bill Cologie, Cherie Freidrich, Gene Stilp and Scott Portzline. Gene Stilp was elected Chairperson, Bill Cologie was elected vice chair and Legal Fund representative, Kay Pickering was elected secretary and Betsy Robinson was elected as treasurer.

TMIA Puts Message in Ad Book

Reaching an important audience, TMIA's Planning Council authorized the placement of an ad calling for no nuclear dumps in Pa. in the program booklet for "Politicians on Parade," a fund-raiser for female Democratic Candidates.

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

Security "Lacking" Says Portzline

Planning Council member Scott Portzline, chairman of TMIA's Security Committee, says the NRC's recent decision to require vehicle barriers at all nuclear plants is "a watered-down version of what it should be." He notes that while barriers can prevent a "TMI-style" intrusion, such barriers won't prevent the kind of damage a truck bomb can cause. The Sandia National Laboratories have reported a large truck bomb could cause a meltdown from outside the vital area at most nuclear plants.

The NRC is now looking to reduce other security requirements, such as the requirements now in place that require locked doors in vital areas. They justify this by pointing to their "fitness for duty" programs for screening new workers. The Commissioners apparently have turned a blind eye to the more than 120 acts of insider sabotage—including murder, suicide, arson, assaults and thefts of security plans—that have occurred at US nuclear plants. A Security Manager for Nuclear Support Services (Hershey), for example, gave clearances to a worker (not at TMI) who had four previous drug-related access denials. The manager has since been dismissed.

"Clearly," Portzline says, "the fitness for duty programs are flawed." Unlocked vital area doors would allow any worker to enter all areas without being identified by the personalized computerized key card system that is now in place. "Public pressure is needed to increase security to a level that accounts for the capabilities of terrorists and saboteurs," he concluded.

TMI Opts for Low Tech Approach on Waste Storage

TMIA members Eric Epstein, Bill Cologie, and Vince Dively took a mid-June tour of TMI's waste storage facility and were duly unimpressed. GPU employees casually referred to the interim storage site as the "carport," as it was indeed open at one end. The cinder block structure, which has been used to store "low level" wastes prior to shipping to off-site long-term storage facility in South Carolina, had no monitors, standing water on the floor, and a chain link fence on one end of the building. One of the dumpster-like containers used for storing the wastes was severely crunched like a dented fender. "They invited us," said Epstein, "so you'd think they would have made an effort to put the best face on things. Apparently, no one thought to at least have a temporary monitor set up in the building, to mop up the water on the floor, or to empty the dented dumpster into an undamaged one, just to make the place look presentable." The visitors did give the utility high marks, however, on efforts to reduce the volume of wastes generated. Through source reduction and the use of technology (trash compactors) they have been able to significantly reduce the volume of wastes generated.

Core Shroud Cracks Found at Peach Bottom

Cracks in the core shrouds have been confirmed at seven U.S. boiling water reactors (BWRs), including Peach Bottom in York County. The cracks, which first surfaced last year at Carolina Power & Light's Brunswick facility, pose a danger to the continued operation of older BWRs, and a potential threat to nuclear meltdown. The purpose of the shrouds is to direct the flow of radioactive water around the core to ensure adequate cooling. In themselves, the cracks probably pose little hazard during normal operations. But an earthquake or other severe jolt to the system could jam the control rods necessary to avert a meltdown.

The Nuclear Monitor reports that according to various sources, it would be virtually impossible to economically repair the cracks, given the high radiation levels that would be encountered. Should the cracks be considered a long-term safety hazard—one that must be repaired—all of these reactors would likely have to be shut down before the end of their license period. Since only a fraction of the BWRs have been inspected, it isn't known how widespread this problem is. If it proves to be widespread, or shows up with age, the NRC will be faced with a difficult decision: shut down more than a third of the nation's nuclear capacity for safety reasons, or allow reactors to operate with known serious safety defects.

Mark Your Calendar: August 27 is National Radioactive Waste Day

August 27 is set for a convergence on Prairie Island, Minnesota to protest the installation of dry casks for irradiated nuclear fuel rods within yards of the homes of the Prairie Island Indian Community. Anyone who can make it to Minnesota is urged to go. There will be time set aside for a meeting of those who have come together, as well as showing strength and solidarity with the folks who have waged a most comprehensive opposition to a radioactive waste dump in their community. For more information and directions to Prairie Island, contact Shean at the Prairie Island Coalition Against Nuclear Storage, telephone 612/333-5807. Locally, TMIA's Planning Council is considering a show of solidarity with the Prairie Island community. Details will be announced.



VIEWPOINT

A Forum on Energy and Environmental Issues

Time To Call It Quits On The Breeder

BY SENATORS JOHN KERRY AND JUDD GREGG

VPT – In the next few weeks, the Senate has an opportunity to prove it can do more than talk about cutting pork barrel projects. It can kill, once and for all, the Advanced Liquid Metal Reactor (ALMR), also known as the breeder reactor.

Congress has already spent over \$1.4 billion dollars on this wasteful and potentially dangerous program since 1986. It lacks commercial support, is bad for the environment, and increases the risk of nuclear proliferation.

Last year, the House wisely voted to terminate the ALMR program, only to have it revived in the Senate by a narrow vote as the result of pressure from lobbyists.

Later this month, the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water will take up the ALMR once again. This time, courage and common sense must win out in the Senate over short-sighted parochial interests.

The breeder reactor is a technology in search of a mission. In its first incarnation, it was devised to generate scarce plutonium for atomic bombs during the Cold War. As the military need for plutonium declined, breeder reactor advocates tried to sell the Clinch River Breeder Reactor (CRBR) in Tennessee as an ever-ready source of fuel for civilian nuclear reactors. But the private sector utilities that would purportedly have benefitted from the program paid only a fraction of the \$257 million they pledged toward the project.

Meanwhile, estimates for the CRBR escalated to more than \$8 billion. In 1983, Congress prudently voted to terminate the Clinch River project.

But the breeder reactor proponents were not so easily deterred. In 1986, they developed the ALMR research program from the ashes of Clinch River to keep the technology alive. Proponents are now arguing the ALMR could solve our plutonium waste disposal problem by "burning"

the existing waste to produce electricity. The process is called "actinide recycling" and its scientific validity is specious at best.

In a recent report, The National Academy of Science (NAS) stated that the ALMR's ability to consume plutonium is "not sufficient to greatly alter the security risks posed by the material remaining in the spent fuel." NAS added that ALMRs do "not offer sufficient advantages to overcome their liabilities of cost, timing and uncertainties." In a September 1993 report, the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) agreed, noting the ALMR's "required reprocessing could multiply the total volume of radioactive waste by ten, thereby driving up costs."

The General Accounting Office (GAO) has estimated that taxpayers will spend \$5 billion on the program by the year 2010, if Congress fails to muster the backbone to kill the ALMR.

Throughout the many lives of the breeder reactor, three things are consistent. First, there is no real commercial interest. Even the trade group of the U.S. electric industry, the Electric Power Research Institute, concluded that using the ALMR to burn plutonium would be costly and cumbersome, and would "amplify political and public opposition to the nuclear program as a whole."

Second, the environmental hazards are generally agreed upon, even by the American Nuclear Energy Council (ANEC). Burning plutonium generates highly radioactive fission products along with toxic heavy metals. ANEC states in Congressional testimony that "we see no benefit in considering...burning as a waste solution for the current fuel."

And finally, the continuation of the breeder reactor program perpetuates plutonium proliferation in the global economy. A move forward in developing commercial breeders is a move backward in arms control.

President Clinton has reviewed

the evidence and decided the ALMR must be terminated. In a recent letter, he stated that the breeder reactor is "not supportive of the non-proliferation objectives articulated in my September 1993 directive on nonproliferation and export controls."

In a March 1994 speech, Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary stated that "continued support of the [ALMR] would make it difficult, if not impossible, for the United States to help lead the world toward reducing the threat of plutonium proliferation."

The breeder has lived too long and has already cost too much. It's time to cut our losses. The only prudent option for the Senate is the kill the breeder reactor once and for all.

Senator John Kerry (D) represents the state of Massachusetts. Senator Judd Gregg (R) represents the state of New Hampshire.

© 1994 Safe Energy Communication Council

Letters should be addressed to **VIEWPOINT**, c/o SECC, 1717 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Suite 805, Washington, D.C. 20036

VIEWPOINT provides the nation's press with expert opinion on timely energy and environmental issues. VIEWPOINT is a public service of the Safe Energy Communication Council, a non-profit organization working to provide factual and educational information on our country's energy choices.

PRINTED ON



RECYCLED PAPER
By American Quick Print

Issues & Concerns Regarding Pennsylvania's "Low-level" Radioactive Waste Facility

**(Use this Flyer, as well as the Questionnaire on the other side,
to ask questions of elected officials, candidates,
and those responsible for designing, building,
and monitoring PA's LLRW dump.)**

- 1. Despite the fact that the planned facility is billed as a "low-level" radioactive waste (LLRW) facility, the majority of the waste volume and almost all the radioactivity will come from nuclear power plants. Some of this "low-level" radioactive waste, such as plutonium-239, has a half-life of 24,400 years and is hazardous up to 500,000 years.**
- 2. The LLRW facility will be designed to last for only 500 years, despite the fact that it will contain waste that will be hazardous for hundreds of thousands of years.**
- 3. Pennsylvania has been given no assurance by the Appalachian States Compact as to the total quantity of waste for which we will be responsible.**
- 4. Chem Nuclear Systems, the LLRW facility operator, is only responsible for the first 30 years of the facility's operation. After that, the liability, burden, and expense of the facility will fall to Pennsylvania's taxpayers.**
- 5. If Chem Nuclear goes out of business or if problems occur after the first 30 years of the operation of the LLRW facility, the taxpayers of Pennsylvania will have to pay for any clean-up costs that occur at the LLRW site. The generators of the radioactive waste are not responsible for the waste once they deliver it to the facility.**
- 6. With the recent closure of Chem Nuclear's Barnwell, S.C. waste facility, there is concern that Pennsylvania's LLRW facility will be forced to proceed at a faster pace, with less oversight and the selection of a politically expedient, but technically inferior, site.**
- 7. Recently, Chem Nuclear has indicated that it will need to return to the Pennsylvania General Assembly for additional funding of the LLRW facility because Chem Nuclear has already spent \$19 million on a project that was expected to cost about \$30 million.**

For more information on LLRW or safe energy issues, contact:

**Three Mile Island Alert
315 Peffer Street, Harrisburg, PA 17102
Phone 717-233-7897, Fax 717-233-3261**

Questionnaire for Pennsylvania Candidates on Nuclear Energy & Radioactive Waste: Summer 1994

This year marks the 15th anniversary of the partial core melt at Three Mile Island. Additionally, Pennsylvania, as a member of the Appalachian States Compact, will soon build a waste facility to handle the nuclear waste of Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware. We are very interested in your opinions on nuclear energy and radioactive waste. Please return your responses to this questionnaire as soon as possible.

State & National Energy Policy

1. Recently, members of Congress have asked President Clinton to appoint an independent commission to review all US nuclear waste programs and recommend revisions to improve present and future safety. Would you join or support such a request?
2. Would you join or support a request to Congress to adopt a national energy policy that makes health, safety, and environmental quality its highest priority?
3. Would you join or support a request to the Pennsylvania General Assembly to adopt a state energy policy that makes health, safety, and environmental quality its highest priority?

State/National Nuclear Energy Policy

4. Would you favor and support federal legislation that enables States to regulate nuclear energy generators and producers of nuclear waste more (but not less) stringently than does the NRC, EPA, Department of Defense, and Department of Transportation?
5. DER plans to become a full "Agreement State" with NRC; when that happens, DER's Bureau of Radiation Protection would then license and regulate most nuclear facilities except power plants. Do you support the addition of toxicologists and medically-trained staff in DER and its Bureau of Radiation Protection in order to carry out functions now performed by the NRC? Alternatively, do you support the transfer of radiation protection to the Department of Health?
6. Would you favor and support federal or state law requiring public utilities that operate nuclear reactors to install and maintain an array of high-quality continuous radiation monitoring devices within the ten-mile radius of their plants, with the utility funding a system of read-out and recording devices supervised by public-interest personnel independent of the utility?

Pennsylvania's LLRW Facility

7. Would you favor and support a two-year moratorium on the Pennsylvania "low-level" radioactive waste facility siting process to permit study of issues concerning public participation, taxpayer liability, and long-term custodial technologies and costs?
8. Would you favor and support the introduction of state legislation that would prohibit DER from taking land for the LLRW site if a majority of the residents in the prospective host community oppose the facility?

For more information on LLRW or safe energy issues, contact:

Three Mile Island Alert
315 Peffer Street, Harrisburg, PA 17102
Phone 717-233-7897, Fax 717-233-3261