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March 5, 1996

The Honorable Dan Schaefer
Chairman, Commerce Subcommittee on Energy and Power
United States House of Representatives
2353 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Schaefer:

We are writing to express our concerns about the actions of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission in responding to reported safety violations at this nation's nuclear power plants. Recently, Time Magazine detailed their investigation of Northeast Utility's Millstone 1 plant in Waterbury, Connecticut. We were disturbed by the article's revelations of repeated safety violations at this plant and the agency's inappropriate responses to these violations. According to the article:

- * Northeast Utility routinely by-passed NRC safety standards at the Millstone plant and also filed misleading safety analyses and reports with the NRC.
- * The NRC knew for over a decade that the plant was operating outside of its safety standards, and although evidence from other plants indicated this was a broad safety concern, the agency did nothing to stop this procedure.
- * Northeast Utility did not take seriously the concerns of their own employees and repeatedly harassed and intimidated employees who raised safety concerns.
- * The NRC may have acted inappropriately with an industry they regulate by sharing drafts of inspection reports, by coaching them on how to quietly get around safety allegations, and by violating the confidentiality owed to industry whistle blowers.

We are deeply concerned with these reported breakdowns in NRC oversight, and we believe this recent incident only underscores the need many of us expressed last year for an oversight hearing on the NRC. Last September during the Commerce Committee's consideration of the reconciliation bill, the Committee voted to extend the NRC's authority to collect user fees through the year 2002. Many of us opposed this measure because we were concerned about extending the agency's authorization without the benefit of a single hearing. Democratic members specifically raised questions about the agency's intentions regarding the

The Honorable Dan Schaefer

March 4, 1996

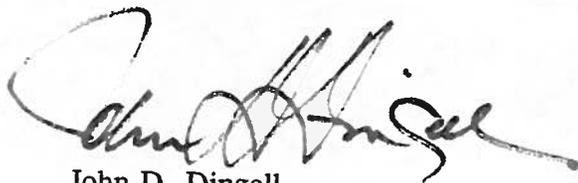
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following safety issues:

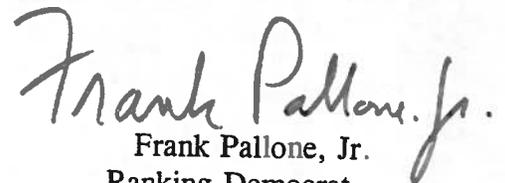
- * Whether the NRC intends to take actions to assure that utilities' safety plans prepare for the possibility of multiple ruptures in steam generator tubes;
- * Whether the NRC intends to require that utilities plug or replace cracked tubes in aging reactors;
- * What action the NRC is taking to force utilities to remove defective electrical cables that have been found to fail under simulated nuclear accidents; and
- * When the NRC intends to require utilities to fix or replace fire protection barriers that are defective and incapable of protecting critical safety equipment used to shut down a reactor during a nuclear accident.

At the September 13, 1995 Commerce Committee markup of the reconciliation bill, you indicated your intention to hold a Subcommittee hearing on the NRC "in the near future." Given that the NRC Chairwoman, Ms. Shirley Ann Jackson, was quoted in the Time Magazine article as saying that the agency was "not always on top of things," we respectfully request that you take up this matter immediately and schedule such a hearing. We believe that the Subcommittee should hold a hearing, so the NRC Chairwoman can make a full public accounting of the agency's actions in maintaining the safety of our nation's nuclear power plants.

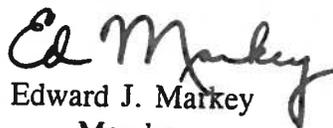
Sincerely,



John D. Dingell
Ranking Democrat
Committee on Commerce



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Ranking Democrat
Subcommittee on
Energy and Power



Edward J. Markey
Member
Subcommittee on
Energy and Power