

POOR ORIGINAL

DOCKET NUMBER
PROD. & UTIL. FAC. 50-289

501 Vine Street
Middletown, PA 17057
July 16, 1979



Honorable Joseph Hendrie, Chairman
United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, DC 20555

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am writing for a group of concerned citizens of the Middletown, Pennsylvania area called FANE. Our group would like to participate in proceedings regarding hearings for the possible opening of Three Mile Island Unit 1. Because we are common people, I would urge you to have such activities in the Middletown area as our funds are extremely limited.

I live within sight of the cooling towers (3 miles) and feel that our psychological health and well being should be a prime consideration of the NRC, in terms of our past experience, the safety of nuclear energy, and the credibility of the utility. Stress and anxiety are constantly working on us, daily.

I understand a management audit by the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission will be available in early spring, 1980. This document may be very helpful to the commission.

It is my hope that the psychological and physical health and safety of the local residents are tantamount to your procedures. We realize the world-wide implications of the hearing process and decision.

Economically speaking, it appears the average Met-Ed consumer in Pennsylvania can expect to pay \$2.97 more each month over the 13 month period begun in July. Additionally, it appears new sources to supply replacement power are being found on a regular basis. I question whether there is a real need for TMI because it appears it makes the company a net seller rather than a net buyer.

I've enclosed several articles which I feel are pertinent to the issue.

Sincerely,

Donald E. Hossler
Donald E. Hossler

cc: Commissioner Victor Gilinsky
Commissioner Richard Kennedy
Commissioner Peter Bradford
Commissioner John Ahearne

7910036074

1083 356

POOR ORIGINAL

The Patriot, Harrisburg, Pa., Friday, July 6, 1979 — 15

Hershey Cut Denied Met-Ed Wins Rate Battle

The federal Energy Regulatory Commission has denied Hershey Electric Co.'s request for a reduction in Metropolitan Edison Co.'s proposed \$4.7 million rate increase for its wholesale customers, according to Donald B. Chubb, HEC vice president and general manager.

The FERC denied the request following oral arguments on the rate increase in Washington, Chubb said.

In those arguments, HEC contended that Met-Ed, operator and part-owner of the Three Mile Island Nuclear Generating Station, was requesting the rate increase primarily to help pay for TMI's crippled Unit 2 reactor, which will be out of service two to four years because of the March 28 nuclear accident at the plant.

Chubb said HEC asked the commission to eliminate Unit 2 from the rate base and then pass on the remaining amount of the \$4.7 million increase — whatever that would be.

He said Met-Ed put the higher rates into effect on June 13, but they are subject to refund since the FERC has scheduled

hearings on the increase in December.

However, HEC was contending that the Unit 2 part of the rate base should be deducted until a final decision is made.

HEC is examining other legal steps that could be taken in the wake of the FERC's ruling, Chubb said. He noted that as Met-Ed's largest wholesale customer, \$3.2 million of the \$4.7 million increase would be borne by HEC.

The increase would mean about a \$9 a month increase for HEC's average residential customer, according to Chubb.

In June when Met-Ed put the higher rates into effect, the state Public Utility Commission gave HEC permission to defer collection from its customers.

Chubb said HEC is paying Met-Ed the higher rates, but will not pass them along to customers until there is either a final decision by the FERC or until HEC's scheduled merger with Pennsylvania Power and Light Co. on March 1, 1980 — whichever comes first.



GPU moves to purify water at TMI

By The Associated Press

Decontamination of nearly a million gallons of radioactive water at Three Mile Island nuclear plant could begin by October.

General Public Utilities, Inc., said Tuesday that Chem-Nuclear Systems, Inc. of Bellevue, Wash. signed an agreement to design and operate purifying equipment.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission must review and approve the proposed design before the system actually goes into operation, GPU said in press release.

About 950,000 gallons of water have been contaminated since March 28, when an accident damaged a reactor at one of Three Mile Island's two nuclear plants.

About half the water is being held in the containment building, a steel and

concrete structure that houses the reactor vessel.

State and local authorities, as well as environmental groups, have voiced concern about what will be done with the water and filed suit to prevent contamination of the Susquehanna River.

The water will be purified by means of an "ion exchange column," a cylindrical vessel filled with resin beads that will attract the radioactive elements in the water.

GPU, parent company of three subsidiaries that own the plant, said the defense industry has used the process for more than two decades to rid liquids of fission products.

The company has not yet finalized plans for the ultimate disposition of the water. But GPU says once it is processed, it will meet all federal, state and local standards of cleanliness.

When the resin beads are saturated with radioactive waste, the company said the cylinders will be shipped to a licensed radioactive waste disposal site enclosed in high-strength, high-integrity casks.

There are licensed sites in Nevada, South Carolina and Washington. The first shipments are planned for Washington.

GPU Service Corp. Vice President Robert Arnold said \$1.8 million has been allocated for the initial design, demonstration and review phase of the work. The first phase is scheduled for completion in September.

Actual processing of the radioactive material at Three Mile Island could begin in October, the company said, but will not start until after the necessary NRC approval is received.

PUC holds the line on costs

On March 29, the day after the TMI accident, the Public Utility Commission granted Metropolitan Edison, operator and 50% owner of TMI, a \$49 million rate increase. The rate increase was based almost entirely upon inclusion of Unit 2 in the rate base. The rate base takes into account such factors as operating costs, fuel costs and profits. These factors should equal the revenue.

The cost of building a power plant cannot be included in the rate base until the plant is completed and in service, or "used and useful."

Responding to public outcry against paying for an accident which had already cost area residents so much, the PUC issued in early April complaints against Met Ed and Pennsylvania Electric charging "excessive, unjust and unreasonable rates." This enabled the PUC to roll back the recent increase until hearings could be held to determine who should pay how much.

At issue in the proceedings were cost of including Unit 2 in the rate base; cost of clean-up of the accident and the cost of replacement power.

On June 13, the PUC announced its decision to remove Unit 2 from the rate base, to not include clean-up costs of the accident but to allow Met Ed to collect \$46 million from the rate payers to cover replacement power.

The PUC's decision set a precedent, since no other regulatory agency has yet ordered the removal of a nuclear plant from the rate base because of anticipated long-term outage. Because many nuclear plants are down more than they are operating, the PUC decision could impact on many other nuclear utilities.

The cost of clean-up was not really an issue in the proceeding other than its impact on the short-term debt of the company. Nevertheless, the PUC declared

that "none of the costs of responding to the incident, including repair, disposal of waste and decontamination are recoverable from ratepayers."

The basis of the PUC approach to the problem of replacement power costs was stated in its decision. "The purchase of energy is a reasonable and necessary cost of providing service which must be recovered from ratepayers. Service cannot be provided without cost.

It is equitable for the ratepayers of Met Ed and Penelec to pay the cost of purchasing power since they are receiving service and will be paying none of the costs of TMI-2. With the levelized energy charge which we will order here, the total rates for electric service to the customers of Met Ed and Penelec will be no greater than the rates which would have been allowed had the incident never occurred. We believe this accomplishes a fair and just result for all concerned... The Commission is of the opinion that the recovery of these costs is required by law. The remaining question is, What is the level of recovery?"

The level the Commissioners settled upon was approximately 20% less than that demanded by Met Ed and even less than the level asked for by the Office of the Consumer Advocate. On its surface, the PUC's decision appears reasonable.

However, upon closer examination, several questions arise. TMI-2 was only generating electricity for three months before the accident happened. Before December 30, 1978, Met Ed. did not have those 800 megawatts. What is it replacing? Did Met Ed have to buy power from the grid before January? If so, why do Met Ed customers now have to pay extra for it? If not, why do they now need to purchase power?

Met Ed repeatedly claimed its stockholders could not possibly absorb the cost of replacement power. Yet testimony during the PUC hearings revealed

that if GPU continued to pay dividends at the post accident

reduced level, yearly
payments would total
60 million
dollars

TMI Center Will Reopen On Saturday

The Three Mile Island Observatory Center will reopen Saturday with a film explaining the March 28 accident at the nuclear power plant.

David Klusick, a spokesman for Metropolitan Edison Co., operator and part owner of TMI, said the 15-minute large-screen video presentation will attempt to answer two questions — what happened and what are the radiological effects of the accident?

"This is not an attempt to promote nuclear power," Klusick said. "We feel we have an obligation to the public to explain what happened."

He said the film will focus on the three factors Met-Ed has claimed contributed to the accident — mechanization, instrument capability and human response.

Although TMI's control room is shown in the film and specific instruments highlighted, there is no re-enactment of the worst nuclear accident in American history, according to Klusick.

"The control room and instruments are used more as props," he said. "The film is not a simulation of the events of the accident."

Klusick said the film, produced by Met-Ed, will be shown continuously at no charge at the observatory center, a building overlooking the massive plant from across the Susquehanna River.

The center, which contains binoculars for viewing the plant and information on nuclear power, has been closed since the March 28 accident.

Upon its reopening Saturday, the center will be open from noon to 5 p.m. daily. It is closed on Mondays.

In addition to the film, Met-Ed will provide literature on the plant, show photographs of cleanup efforts since the accident and explain current technical modifications and recovery tasks.

The center was heavily visited prior to the accident and Klusick said the company feels it is still a tourist attraction.

"It's obvious that there is great public interest," he said. "All you have to do is come down here on any given day and observe all the vehicles pulled over alongside the road."

Met-Ed says visitors to the center will find picnic tables and adequate off-street parking.

Karl Abraham, a spokesman for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, said he had just heard of the observatory center reopening and was not aware of any NRC involvement with the film.

"The public relations activities of licensees are outside the scope of our regulatory authority," Abraham said. "We have authority only to regulate the protection of the public and the environment."

Met-Ed Bills Users For Cost Of Accident

Customers of the Metropolitan Edison company will begin paying replacement costs for the Three Mile Island accident beginning this month.

According to Met-Ed officials, the July bills, which started to go out Friday, will contain the 8.8 mills per kilowatt hour energy cost adjustment authorized by the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission in mid-June.

That new tariff was approved Thursday by the PUC. Under the approval Met-Ed will collect the 8.8-mill adjustment for an 18-month period. Normally that mill rate fluctuates with the amount of energy the company was forced to purchase.

But since the TMI accident, Met-Ed has been purchasing power on a regular basis, at costs estimated at \$750,000 to \$1 million a day. At this point the energy cost adjustment will be the only cost of the TMI accident which will be passed on to the customer.

The PUC has ruled that all other costs should be picked up by the company.

The increase will return an estimated \$46 million to the

company which is in financial difficulty as a result of the Middletown accident.

An average customer can expect to pay about about \$2.97 more in July than in June. That increase will continue, in addition to any other increases, for the 18-month period. Met-Ed says the average customer is one using about 500 kilowatt hours per month.

Company vice president for consumer affairs, Ernest W. Schleicher, said the overall increase in customers bills is only four percent since 1975.

But customers will get some good news on the new bill also, Met-Ed said. The company will be refunding \$12.4 million in Public Utility Realty Tax overcollections over the same 18-month period.

That refund will be returned to customers in the form of lower state tax surcharges on the July bills.

Reference Books Are Acquired

The Patriot, Harrisburg, Pa., Friday, July 13, 1979 — 11

Meter Damaged

TMI-2 Fire Put Out

A brief fire in circuitry in the control room of Three Mile Island reactor unit 2 caused minor damage to radiation-monitoring equipment Thursday morning, according to company and Nuclear Regulatory Commission spokesmen.

The 7:40 a.m. fire, extinguished immediately by control room personnel, was caused by an overheated resistor in circuitry for a meter, the NRC spokesman said.

The meter monitors radiation in waste gas in the auxiliary building, the spokesman said.

Circuit boards in the radiation panel were slightly damaged and the panel will be replaced, the spokesman said.

The meter was disabled by the fire, but a similar meter in the auxiliary building remained available to monitor the waste gas radiation level, he said.

Met-Ed press officer Bill Cross said, "It was a 30-second thing. It happened to a meter in one of the controls. There was a short in the meter."

"An instrument man took a fire extinguisher and had it out in 30 seconds," he said.

There were no injuries or serious damage reported.

The fire occurred in the control room of the same unit which was severely damaged March 28 during the worst nuclear power plant accident in the nation's history.

By RICHARD ROBERTS
Staff Writer

A Metropolitan Edison Co. official believes it was not necessary for Gov. Dick Thornburgh to advise pregnant women and preschool children to evacuate their homes within a five-mile radius of the Three Mile Island Nuclear Generating Station during the crisis at the plant, the Sunday Patriot-News has learned.

John G. Herbein, Met-Ed vice president-generation, told 17 members of a special State House committee investigating the accident, during a tour of the plant Friday, that the evacuation was unnecessary. Met-Ed barred newsmen from the tour.

Met-Ed officials will conduct a similar tour Monday for members of the U.S. House Energy and Environment Subcommittee and newsmen. The subcommittee is scheduled to begin hearings on the accident a few days after the visit.

Herbein had not commented on the accident since March 31, when Met-Ed officials began deferring all statements to officials of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Asked by state Rep. Stephen R. Reed, D-Harrisburg, whether the governor's evacuation advisory was "wise," Herbein said:

"That's really the governor's decision. He had to make that call. He had advisers — I'd like to think that we were one of the advisers — but that was his call.

"In retrospect, I'm sure that will be debated back and forth for years, as to whether or not that was necessary. I personally, not as a company, but I personally, Jack Herbein, don't feel it was necessary."

Met-Ed President Walter M. Creitz, who accompanied the tour, added: "I think the governor's statement was a precautionary step. He had a hell of a decision he had to make."

Asked by Reed whether a re-

POOR ORIGINAL Says Evacuation Unnecessary

measuring 1,200 millirems per hour.

"Somebody made a calculation, and somebody said 1,200 (millirems per hour) and we said, I think, 350, 360," he said. "They had one number and we had another, and it just really mushroomed the thing."

But later in the tour Friday, Herbein revised his assessment:

"One of the things that I told the press, I guess it was Friday morning (March 30) when we had an uncontrolled release (of radioactivity) from our makeup tank. I told the people that I thought it was on the order of about 350 m-rems (millirems). There were other readings that were supposedly issued by the NRC that said 1,000-1,200 m-rems.

"I just found out a few minutes ago . . . that in fact there was one reading taken directly above the stack that indicated that we did have 1,200 m-rems, and that probably existed on the order of seconds, entered the air currents and whatever, it was dispersed.

"I told the press not 1,200, but 350. That certainly was not an attempt on my part to deceive the public, but rather to share the information."

Herbein equated the amount of radioactivity released from the plant during the accident with the amount of radioactive fallout that landed on Central Pennsylvania in November 1976 as a result of nuclear weapons testing in China.

Herbein defended his public statements made during the first four days of the crisis:

"As events unfolded, it became more and more complicated. I primarily felt an obligation, from a company standpoint, to inform the public so that they would have the knowledge that I had. And I did that.

"Subsequently, I was criticized greatly. But I told it as I saw it and as I became aware of events."

Creitz said Met-Ed on March 28 did not perceive the seriousness of the accident. Teams from the plant began monitoring radioactivity off site before 7:30 a.m. and at first did not find radioactivity above normal background levels, he said.

"We were constantly monitoring this thing," he said. "What should we tell the public, what should we tell the press at that point, what should we tell the governor?"

Herbein said the formation of a hydrogen bubble in the reactor vessel, which presented the greatest hazard during the early days of the accident, could not have been foreseen.

"There was no way to anticipate this hydrogen bubble formation," he said. "We didn't become aware of that until, I guess, late Friday.

"Because of some analysis of possible hydrogen detonation that had occurred the afternoon of the 28th, we began to recognize that we could have had oxidation of zirconium and, in fact, the liberation of hydrogen.

"And then as we became aware of that and started looking at things, we began calculating the bubble size.

"There's no way that at least I or the operators or anyone could have — at Wednesday 7 o'clock, noon or 8 o'clock, 9 o'clock at night — have known that we were into that kind of situation."

Herbein discounted the hazard presented by the hydrogen bubble:

"Even if the hydrogen had exploded, conceivably it could have split the (reactor) vessel. The fuel possibly would have been fragmented. I guess it's hard for me to conceive that that pillbox there (the

reactor containment building), with its reinforced steel, with a dome that's three feet thick of concrete could have possibly given way.

"Somehow it possibly could have. But the thing wouldn't have crumbled completely. There'd have been some release of radioactive material. In my opinion there would have been time to do something and evacuate people.

"You can postulate all kinds of things. Do away with the containment completely — don't give us any credit for it. Postulate that somehow the hydrogen, when it exploded, exploded the fuel into a mass. But you still don't get a hydrogen bomb, you still don't get an atomic bomb.

"You get fuel melting, certainly, and you get some release of radioactivity — particulate iodine, noble gases — into the environment. But no way do you get the effects of a Hiroshima or Nagasaki — you just don't."

Herbein also discounted NRC reports that a core meltdown was possible during the crisis:

"If in fact we had had what they call a meltdown, where there was inadequate cooling through the core, and the uranium pellets reached a melting temperature of some 5,200-5,300 degrees, and then the molten mass that these pellets became melted out through the fuel cladding and collected in the bottom of the vessel in such a unique geometry that criticality was maintained — fission neutrons continue to split and you continue to generate heat — that in itself is just about impossible.

"When that fuel heats up, it tends to shut itself down. It doesn't fission at high temperatures the way it does at 1,000 degrees. But assuming it somehow kept on going and fell together in the exact, precise geometry, it still has to work its way through an eight-inch, carbon-steel vessel.

"Then it's got into a base mat 11 or 12 feet thick — solid concrete — then from there it's got to go down through solid bedrock. Somewhere along the line it's going to cool off. I can promise you that."

A12—Sunday Patriot-News, Harrisburg, Pa., May 8, 1979

B

Met-Ed Official

From Page A1

lease of radioactivity from the plant on March 30 was controlled — as Met-Ed that day said it was — or uncontrolled, Herbein said:

"I guess (it was) controlled in the respect we knew we were going to do this, we knew we had to, we

thought we were being responsible by putting monitoring teams in a position to determine exactly what we did."

Herbein at first reiterated his contention of March 30 that an NRC report that day incorrectly described a cloud of radioactivity released from the plant that morning

Agreement with a Canadian utility is expected to aid GPU with finances

PARSIPPANY, N.J. (AP) — A newly signed purchase-power agreement with a Canadian utility should save General Public Utilities Corp. about \$1.5 million in replacement-energy costs, company officials say.

GPU signed a \$1-million-a-week contract with Ontario Hydro Monday to buy 200 megawatts of electricity a week through the New York State-based Niagara Mohawk Power Corp., said William G. Kuhns, utility chairman.

The parent company for Jersey Central Power & Light Co. and two Pennsylvania utilities has been buying electricity to replace power it lost when the Three Mile Island Nuclear Generating Station's Unit No. 2 shut down on March 28.

The three subsidiaries own the disabled nuclear plant, which was capable at one time of producing 1,700 megawatts of electricity, said Kenneth McKee, utility spokesman.

The cost of the latest agreement, said Kuhns, is \$250,000 less than the

price of power taken from the Pennsylvania-New Jersey-Maryland Power Pool.

The Canadian agreement is the fourth purchase-power agreement the utility has signed since TMI-2 was shut down after the nation's worst nuclear accident.

McKee said the electricity received through the four agreement and power taken from the tri-state power grid will cost the utility about \$22 million a month.

That price tag is \$2 million a month lower than original replacement-cost estimates given to the state Board of Public Utilities in May, McKee added.

GPU has signed purchase agreements with Allegheny Power Systems in New York, the Philadelphia Electric Company and Pennsylvania Power & Light Co. in Allentown, Pa., he said.

The state Board of Public Utilities last month granted Jersey Central Power & Light Co., which owns 25 percent of the disabled plant, a

\$45 million rate increase to help defray the replacement energy costs.

And a new request expected this month from Jersey Central could be as high as 10 percent, said George Metzgar, a utility spokesman.

Metzgar said the exact amount of the increase, affecting the utility's 670,000 customers, has not been determined.

"It could be less than 10 percent and it could be more," he said.

Metzgar said the upcoming request has nothing to do with the nuclear accident.

"Whether Three Mile Island happened or not, we would still be seeking another increase," he said. He attributed the need for more money to inflation and soaring fuel prices.

Eight residents in f

Temple remains

By The Evening News, Harrisburg, Pa., Wednesday, July 11, 1979 — 29

41.5% of polled residents want TMI closed 'forever'

can be made safe some day, compared with 22.8 percent who think it can.

—60.5 percent oppose the continued use and research of nuclear power as an energy source in the U.S. opposed to 22.1 percent who don't.

—63.7 percent favor a moratorium on the building and operation of new nuclear power plants in the U.S.

—72.4 percent oppose the continued operation of present nuclear power plants.

New

More than 40 percent of area residents who responded to a poll taken by state Sen. George W. Gekas, R-Harrisburg, want the Three Mile Island Nuclear Generating Station closed "forever."

Gekas said Tuesday that 41.5 percent of his constituents who answered a seven-question poll in The Evening News and The Patriot called for the plant's permanent shutdown.

He said 21.8 percent want to reopen TMI as a non-nuclear energy producing facility and 22.7 percent want to reopen TMI as a nuclear facility only when improved and tested nuclear safeguards are developed.

Eight percent of the 1,188 persons responding did not answer the question on reopening the plant, Gekas said.

In another question, 88.3 percent (1,049 persons) do not believe nuclear energy is safe today and only 139 or 11.7 percent said it was.

And 57.9 percent of the poll participants said that Metropolitan Edison Co. should pay for the accident, according to Gekas. He said 1.0 percent said customer should pay, 3.2 percent named the federal government, 4.2 percent named stockholders, insurance companies and Babcock & Wilcox and .08 percent said "those at fault."

The poll result appears to be a confirmation of what I have perceived to be the attitude of my district, namely, a rejection of nuclear energy and TMI," Gekas said.

He said he would present the poll to the President's Commission on TMI during summer hearings in Washington.

"It will be my goal to convince those who control the operation of TMI and all other nuclear power plants that the trauma of mental, emotional and economic pain suffered by the residents of this area during the crisis as well as the continuing anguish of future uncertainties must not occur again to these or other people," Gekas said.

Gekas said he delivered a letter to Harold Denton, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation director, stating Gekas' opposition to the reopening of TMI. Denton was President Jimmy Carter's on-site representative during the TMI accident.

In other questions, Gekas said 50.1 percent do not believe nuclear energy

AS A FILMMAKER

Editor's Note: Sharon Johnson, a Patriot-News movie reviewer, evaluates the film produced by Metropolitan Edison Co. to explain the recent "events" at the Three Mile Island Nuclear Generating Station.

By SHARON JOHNSON
Staff Writer

The world premiere of a documentary film was held with very little fanfare at the Three Mile Island Observation Center during the weekend. When a major studio attempts to introduce a new movie quietly, it's a sure sign executives there have little faith in their product. The same undoubtedly holds true for Metropolitan Edison Co.

Giving credit where credit is due, the utility does take responsibility for the 70-minute explanation of "the events (their term) at Three Mile Island." It is, we are told, produced and directed by Met-Ed. But you would have guessed that.

I refer to "it" and "the movie" because, sparing every expense, Met-Ed has failed to give its creation a title. (Unless it's called "Welcome to the Three Mile Island Observation Center" which does flash on screen at the beginning. But that would be ridiculous. I give them the benefit of the doubt.)

Some might argue it's not even a movie. It is a video cassette played on a seven-foot television screen

7-9 (E) MET-ED GENERATES LESS THAN RAVE REVIEWS

In a rather bright room. Also lacking is a cast. The movie's star is an omniscient narrator who introduces himself only as "We at Metropolitan Edison." He is our cheerful guide to the wonderful world of nuclear power.

Despite "worldwide coverage by the news media," he says, people still wonder what happened during the

A review

TMI incident and what the effects on the health of the population were. And then comes the gospel according to Met-Ed.

The "what happened" is covered rather badly. Anyone who read a newspaper, listened to the radio or watched television news during TMI already has received a much more comprehensive explanation of the difficulties of the Unit 2 reactor. Met-Ed still favors the scientific explanation, and the narrator's droning references to "severe flow oscillations in the circulating pumps" may lull you to sleep if not a sense of security.

And what special effects? A schematic diagram of Unit 2 is shown. The narrator wishes us to concentrate

on a specific part. A pointer slides across the screen and shows where to look. Try to top that, Alfred Hitchcock.

Actually any reasonably bright high school pupil given a camera and a supply of film could have put together a more impressive product than this. The camera work is sloppy; there's not a panning or tracking shot in the movie that's smoothly done. There's invariably too much or too little lighting. Technically it's a mess.

The only creativity is in Met-Ed's re-creation of the week of TMI. If you lived through it, I'm sure you remember it differently. You may recall that hydrogen bubble that had us all worried. Met-Ed chides us gently for our lack of faith. Although it "received extensive coverage by the news media" (yes, them again) Met-Ed always knew there was no ~~danger~~ of an explosion. And, the narrator triumphantly concludes, that view was later endorsed by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. That the bubble had the NRC worried is a fact he glides over. That the NRC also feared a meltdown is never mentioned. After all, this is not "China Syndrome II."

Met-Ed speaks of "some releases of radioactivity to the environment as a result of safety operations" and "no injury and minimal risk to the public health."

and replaces in "the ability of Metropolitan Edison, government agencies and the affected population to cope."

The one truly dramatic moment in the movie comes when the narrator speaks of "the real danger to the reactor." Because, as the movie so clearly indicates, at Met-Ed that's what it was all about — machines, not people. That the "off-site population" (that's us, in a term George Orwell would have appreciated, suffered through a week of terror is, to the utility, a factor that does not compute.

So the narrator can blithely assure us that Unit 2 will be operating again in about three years. That prediction failed to bring a round of applause from the standing-room-only audience (there are only 30 chairs) in the observation center. "It didn't tell you anything," a man concluded as he left. A woman had left midway through the film with the simple observation, "This is making me sick." That's the trouble with this business. Everyone's a critic.

Whether it was meant as documentary or propaganda, Met-Ed's TMI story is a monumental mess. For sheer lackluster, it ranks below the TMI commemorative plate now being peddled on TV. But in terms of historic significance, the two are running neck and neck.