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January 30, 1984

Nunzio Palladino
United States
Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D.C. 20555

Dear Chairman Palladino,

I read with great dismay the enclosed article in our local press. Mr. Marabito of Region III says the "extent of the quality assurance problems at Midland are not as pervasive as they were at Zimmer." This certainly is not encouraging for the many citizens who for years have wanted increased NRC involvement at Midland.

Mr. James Keppler, Region III administrator, reviewed a partial list of the Quality Assurance problems at Midland before the Subcommittee on Energy and the Environment on June 16, 1983. This, and the fact that the Construction Completion Program (which will identify problems) make Mr. Marabito's statement a bit premature.

On January 20, 1984, I spoke with an official in Mr. Richard DeYoung's office on the subject of increased NRC inspectors. I was referred to a response Mr. DeYoung made to a citizen's petition on October 6, 1983. In it he indicated that this would be determined by "the Commission budget process." (Docket No. 50-329, 50-330, 10CFR 2206, p.3)

With the recent decisions at Byron, Marble Hill, Zimmer and Limerick, it would seem that additional inspectors could be added without expanding the budget. There are only five inspectors working on 15 years of errors. Indeed, it would seem foolish for the NRC not to do this.

My request is simple. Will you please increase the number of NRC inspectors at Midland?

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Leo R. Romo

Leo R. Romo

Corresponding Secretary

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More NRC inspectors sought

Group wants staff shifted from nuke plants that floundered

BY KEITH NAUGHTON
News Staff Writer

A nuclear power watchdog group is pressuring the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission to beef up its staff inspecting the Midland Nuclear Plant.

Government Accountability Project, a Washington-based citizens group, will send a letter to the commission Friday urging it to shift inspectors who had been assigned to nuclear projects that have floundered recently to the Midland team.

In the past two weeks, two Midwestern nuclear plants have halted construction — the Zimmer Nuclear Plant in Ohio and the Marble Hill Nuclear Plant in Indiana.

The three Ohio utilities that own Zimmer announced Saturday the plant will be converted to a coal-fired operation. Public Service of Indiana closed Marble Hill Jan. 15 because the utility ran out of money to complete it.

Billie Garde, an investigator for the citizens group, said Midland needs a larger NRC staff because of the "comprehensive" completion program the plant is undergoing.

"The construction completion program is the most stringent, most comprehensive and most dif-

ficult reinspection in the nuclear industry today," Ms. Garde said. "It would take a minimum of a dozen people to effectively monitor the (construction completion program). Less than that jeopardizes the integrity of the program."

A five-man NRC team monitors the Midland plant now, with two members of the team at the plant-site full-time.

The NRC has not determined what it will do with the inspectors from Zimmer and Marble Hill, NRC spokesman Russ Marabito said.

"Some of them may be shifted over to possibly the Midland (plant)," Marabito said.

Zimmer had a staff of eight full-time inspectors with three inspectors on call whenever needed, Marabito.

But Midland does not need as large a staff because it is not as troubled as Zimmer was, he said.

"The extent of the quality assurance problems (at Midland) are not as pervasive as they were at Zimmer," Marabito said.

Marble Hill is not similar in any way to Midland because it was not a troubled plant, Marabito claimed.

But the NRC stopped all safety-related construction at Marble Hill

in 1979 because it found quality assurance and management problems at the plant.

If the Midland staff is not increased in size, it will slow the plant's construction program and eventually delay the completion of the project, Ms. Garde claimed.

"You could have a situation where people are sitting around twiddling their thumbs, waiting for an NRC inspector," she said.

The utility does not believe the size of the NRC team will have an impact on implementation of the construction program, Consumers spokesman James Storey said.

"The NRC is not scheduled, under the plan we drafted, to get that involved in the day-to-day process," Storey said.

The NRC ordered Consumers Power Co. to draft a formal completion plan for its plant after federal inspectors found several quality assurance problems at the plant in 1982.

Storey would not say if the utility is pleased with the performance of the present NRC staff or if additional staffing is necessary.

"That's really a question the NRC has to determine... It's their role and responsibility to determine the staff that is needed here," Storey said.