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ANGUS S. KING, JR.
GOVERNOR

October 10, 1996

EVAN D. RICHERT, AICP
DIRECTOR

Ellis W. Merschoff
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington D.C. 20555-0001

Dear Ellis,

With this letter I would like to provide some comments pertaining to the process of the Independent Safety Assessment (ISA) of Maine Yankee. But first I want to thank you and Ed Jordan for the full cooperation you gave to me and to other state team participants and observers. Your doors were always open for discussions, and we were always able to work out solutions that preserved the interest and mission of the NRC and that of the State of Maine.

A large team, as this was, required strong leadership to move forward, and I believe your skills were exceptional in assuring that all team members were able to contribute and the process remained focused and objective. As I read the report, I believe it is fair, objective and balanced which is the result of a team made up of individuals who are highly qualified and confident in their disciplines, and able to critically discuss the issues in a large group.

I also want to note that this type of inspection/assessment that the team performed was much more revealing of the Maine Yankee operation than the many "spot" inspections that NRC conducts routinely. Without doubt, an integrated inspection/assessment requires more resources from NRC as well as the licensee, however consideration to some type of periodic inspection/assessment of a nuclear power plant in lieu of "spot" inspections may be of greater benefit to the NRC, the public, and to the licensee.

As for comments on the process, I offer the following:

- 1) NRC should continue to offer States to participate in inspection/assessment activities. However, if states are offered full participation privileges, care must be taken to assure the independence of State participants as well as those of the NRC with regards to regulation or oversight of the licensee. The independence of a team must be preserved, as it was in the Maine Yankee ISA, to provide a fresh look at a nuclear power plant operation and to give credibility of the results to the public.
- 2) As with this team, State participants must be full time members of the team to assure a full understanding of the issues that are brought forth.

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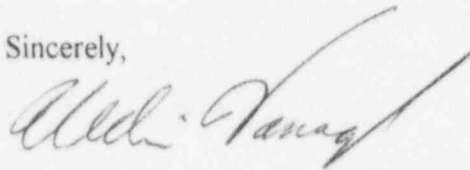
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- 3) I thought the use of State process observers worked well, and I think it would be appropriate and useful to provide a limited number of opportunities where the process observers can express their thoughts and provide comments on issues and the process with the full team present.
- 4) The NRC team leader has the most influence and control to assure an inspection/assessment is technically comprehensive and supportable, as well as retaining the fairness, objectivity and balance. The criteria and/or judgment that was used in choosing the NRC team leader for the Maine Yankee Independent Safety Assessment is appropriate and should be considered in the formation future teams.
- 5) As a final comment, I thought the organization, management, and process control of the team was excellent and should be used as a model for future NRC /State cooperative efforts.

It was a pleasure to work with the NRC through the summer, and I wish you well.

Sincerely,



Uldis Vanags
State Nuclear Safety Advisor

cc: Edward L. Jordan, Director AEOD, US NRC
Governor Angus S. King, JR.
Peter Wiley, Office of the Governor