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MANAGEMENT, INFORMATION, AND
TECHNOLOGY

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2902

September 18, 1996

Mr. Dennis Rathbun, Director of Congressional Affairs
Nuclear Regulatory Commission
11555 Rockville Pike
Rockville, MD 20852

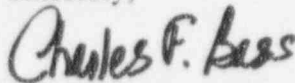
Dear Mr. Rathbun:

I am writing on behalf of John C. Calhoun, Jr. who has concerns about safety issues at nuclear power plants.

Enclosed is a copy of his letter to me dated March 19, 1996 and a copy of a letter he wrote to the Keene Sentinel, a newspaper located in Keene, New Hampshire, which was published on July 1, 1996. He has also given me copies of magazine and newspaper articles relating to this issue.

It would be appreciated if you could provide me with information to answer his concerns. I will await your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Charles F. Bass
Member of Congress

CFB/jpl

Enclosures

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JOHN CALHOUN & ASSOCIATES • FORESTERS
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March 19, 1996

Congressman Charles Bass
1728 Longworth House Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 201515

JOHN C. CALHOUN, JR.
P.O. BOX 8, GILSUM, N.H. 03113
RES: 603 352 2865 BUS: 603 357 1236

Dear Charley:

I hope that you had a chance to read the very heavy March 4, 1996, Time magazine article regarding the whistle blowing engineers working for Northeast Utilities who called attention to shocking safety neglect and collusion with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to falsify records in order to save money for NU during refueling procedures. This raises grave questions as to who is looking out for the safety of the public living innocently down wind of these plants whose systems and procedures have been so compromised.

Yesterdays Keene Sentinel carried the enclosed article written by a whistle blower who used to be an engineer at the Vermont Yankee in Vernon, 20-odd miles from my door and the doors of my grandchildren.

Let me ask you, both in your role as a public servant and as one concerned about your family as well, living as you do between Vernon and Seabrook, is anyone in official capacity in these matters, really looking out for us and our families, and for the public? If the NRC appears to be more concerned with the economic survival of Northeast Utilities and PSNH, to the point that they will admit that they have falsified their own safety codes and procedures, and the NRC Commissioners are only appointed if they are known to be enthusiastic nuclear advocates, who is qualified to judge the safety of all of the Nuclear Plants in the Northeast, or elsewhere, for that matter?

Charley, is this a valid concern, or are all these alarmists, and Time, needlessly feeding our collective anxieties? I have recently raised these issues with the N.H. Public Utilities Commission and Governor Merrill, but so far, they have not replied and I am not holding my breath. Thank you for any light that you can shed here.

Most sincerely yours,

John C. Calhoun, Jr.

What will it take?

To The Sentinel:

To the president of the United States, N.H. congressional delegation, and those seeking to represent me in those offices:

Now that there has been a tragic accident, killing dozens of passengers on ValuJet, it has occurred to those involved with the Federal transportation agency that, in view of the safety issues that had been ignored at ValuJet, by the FAA, that it was most important in future that the FAA concentrate its responsibility solely on the safety issues involved with flying, and leave the promotion of air travel as an industry to other entities.

Everything that has been in favor of that narrowing of mission for the FAA in the case of air safety could, and should, be applied to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the nuclear power industry. In the case of the many nuclear power plants scattered throughout the country, there has been only one major accident, at Three Mile Island, though there have been numerous other "incidents." Will it take a major accident, on the Chernobyl scale, to bring similar pressure on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to sharpen up its mission and concentrate only on safety?

That should certainly end the promotion, or at least the coddling, of the industry, as was described in the April 4, 1996, article in Time magazine, wherein several instances of violations of safety rules regarding speeding up of refueling of several of Northeast Utilities' Connecticut nuclear plants were reported and documented. Such shortcuts, in clear violation of the NRC's rules, were allowed to save NU fuel-purchase costs during "extra" shutdown time.

It may be that the NRC mission statement does not call for active promotion of the nuclear power industry, but the original Atomic

Energy Commission was certainly charged to promote. The record shows that nominees to the commission by the president must be approved by "the industry" to be nominated. This may be why at present there are only two out of five members seated. It is no accident that a former NRC commissioner now sits on the Northeast Utilities' board of directors.

What will it take for the nuclear industry to get proper oversight, to correct the problems identified by Time, that very well may exist nationwide? Have we, as a nation, and have you, as our leaders, forgotten the major alarming questions raised by the Kemeny Report and the report prepared by Rogovin after Three Mile Island? How close are we to having our own Chernobyl? Do the inspector general's critical reports on the NRC and similarly toned congressional reports mean nothing, as they also gather dust on the shelves? All of those documents called for sweeping and fundamental changes in the nuclear industry and its watchdog, the NRC. And nothing fundamental has been done.

The ultimate answer to the question may lie in the ValuJet syndrome. But a nuclear accident will involve not a hundred or so deaths; it will involve thousands, even tens of thousands. Perhaps our government leaders will have to have as intimate contact with a nuclear plant as they do with the plane from D.C., on the flight back home, to force them to give this matter the serious and sober attention that I, at least, think it deserves.

As you all line up to urge me to vote for you, here is one issue for which I want to hear your clear response, and the sooner the better.

JOHN CALHOUN

P.O. Box 8

Gilsum

Keene Sentinel 7/1/96