Met-Ed / GPU

Metropolitan Edison Company
Post Office Box 542
Reading Pennsylvania 19603
215 929-3601

June 28, 1979

Mr. Chip Foster
Special Inquiry Group on TMI
6935 Arlington Boulevard
Bethesda, MD 20014

Dear Mr. Foster:

I am responding to your telephone request yesterday for the transcripts of press briefings, conferences, statements, etc. that were made by Met-Ed from March 28 until the time when the NRC took over the responsibilities for issuing public statements regarding the TMI accident situation.

Enclosed please find those transcripts, etc. that I know to be available.

Yours truly,

Blaine F. Fabian
Manager-Communications Services

BFF:dle

Enclosures

cc: Ernest Blake, Esq.

ATTACHMENT A

Initial Statement, 7:30 A.M., March 28, 1979

"The nuclear reactor at Three Mile Island Unit 2 was shutdown as prescribed when a malfunction related to a feedwater-pump occurred about 4:00 a.m., Wednesday (March 28). The entire unit was systematically shut down and will be out of service for about a week while equipment is checked and repairs made."

ATTACHMENT D

We had a turbine trip early this morning due to a feedwater problem in the secondary side of the plant (not a nuclear problem). This caused the reactor to trip on high pressure, which was followed by the pressurizer refief valves relieving, which resulted in a radioactive water release in the reactor building.

Since this radioactive coolant water was released inside the reactor building, this led to the emergency plan implementation. Radiation monitoring teams have been dispatched on site and off site to monitor for possible external radioactive releases. None has been found, and we do not expect any.

We are presently bringing the plant down to an orderly cold shut-down condition, with no consequences to the public expected.

10 Am.
3/28/79

ATTACHMENT E

Statement Prepared For Answering Press Queries As Of Noon, March 28, 1979

At 4:00 a.m. Wednesday, the reactor at TMI Unit 2 was automatically tripped and shut down due to a mechanical malfunct[illegible] in the System.

All procedures dictated by state and regulatory authorities have bem followed, including the routine notification of state Civil Defense, Environmental, and police authorities.

In accordance with procedure, radiation levels are being monitored in and around the plant. At this time, there have been no recordings of any significant levels of radiation, and none are expected outside the plant. No evacuation of the local population is indicated at this time. The reactor is being cooled according to design by the reactor coolant system and should be cooled by the end of the day. There is no danger of a meltdown.

Unit 1 at TMI is presently out of operation for a routine refueling. The two units together produce about 1700 mw of electricity. There were no injuries either to plant workers or to the public.

RADIO TV REPORTS, INC.

"GOOD MORNING AMERICA" Show
3/29/79

41 EAST 42ND STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10017, 697-5100

FOR HILL & KNOWLTON

PROGRAM GOOD MORNING AMERICA

STATION WABC-TV AND THE ABC TELEVISION NETWORK

DATE MARCH 29, 1979 7:15AM

CITY NEW YORK

BROADCAST EXCERPT

DAVID HARTMAN: Early yesterday morning an alarming accident occurred as you know by now at the Three Mile nuclear powerplant about ten miles outside of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. This morning, we're going to talk about the accident and its implications. At the studio of WTPA in Harrisburg are Walter Creitz, who is the president of Metropolitan Edison. That's the utility company that operates the Three Mile powerplant and Bettina Gregory, who has been covering the story for ABC News, and with us here in New York is Daniel Ford.

He's the Executive Director of the Union of Concerned Scientists and [illegible] has been a leading critic of nuclear powerplants. Good morning, welcome. [illegible] Good morning, Mr. Creitz, and Ms. Gregory. First of all, Mr. Creitz, to date has anyone been hurt in any way or now is there any danger to anyone either at the plant, in the local community or potential danger to us outside the local community in Harrisburg.

WALTER CREITZ: In response to that question, David, the answer is no. No employee of Metropolitan Edison Company or any member of the public has been exposed to a radiation level which would be considered dangerous. The amount radiation measured outside the plant has been relatively a very low level.

DAVID: Is there any danger of what we call fallout? [illegible] of all this talk, Mr. Creitz, of the winds blowing from Pennsylvania to the east or what have you, is there any danger to anyone to your knowledge?

CREITZ: Sure. That radioactivity is in the atmosphere and it will travel to some degree with the winds just as the nuclear bomb blasts that occurred in China several years ago, but the measurements and the degree of radiation is very minimal.

MARTIN: Bettina?

BETTINA GREGORY: Mr. Gritta, is there radioactivity still leaking out of that plant?

GRITTA: Anything that can be nature is radioactive and all with bodies release small amounts of radiation, and I would say at this point in time there is a much smaller level of radiation released at Three Mile Island.

GREGORY: But there is still some release?

GRITTA: There is some. The system cannot get down to zero. In fact it's not designed to get down to zero. There's normally a very small degree of radioactive release under normal operations.

GREGORY: How long will it be before that can be stopped?

GRITTA: Well, we are pleased that the measurements of radiation has substantially reduced. We are hopefully that we can continue to make progress today so that we can get on with the job of getting a look at the reactor itself so that we can then plan together with the review of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission a procedure that we can clean up the plant, clean up the area and make repairs.

GREGORY: How did this accident happen?

GRITTA: Well, anything that can makes will not operate perfectly. A piece of equipment failed and this is not in what we call the nuclear loop. It was in the turbine loop. This in turn indicated to the system that there was no longer the requirement of the reactor to supply heat. Immediately, the reactor went into its shutdown mode. The control rods dropped into the reactor to shut it down. However, the pressure in the containment got to a point that was higher than what it should be and the relief valves opened. So the whole safety system did operate properly.

GREGORY: Yes, but the safety system was apparently not adequate to keep at this radioactivity leaking out into the atmosphere and the plant, as you've just...

GRITTA: But the plant itself did operate safely. We do note that high level of radiation within the reactor containment vessel, and it is a containment vessel and radioactivity is contained in it. We have that something happened but we won't know the degree of the problem until we get a chance to take a closer look at it.

HARTMAN: Pardon, excuse me. Mr. Ford would like to ask you a question, Mr. Creitz.

DANIEL FORD: Mr. Creitz, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission has indicated that there's some leak in the primary loop itself. Is that true and have you discovered the source of the leak?

CREITZ: Yes, we did -- we do suspect that there's a small leak between the primary and the secondary system in one of the steam generators. That steam generator is now isolated and is not functioning like the other one is.

FORD: Can you tell me what plant equipment has been disabled as a result of the accident? Is that information clear to you yet?

CREITZ: Not, it is not clear, and it won't be until we get an opportunity of reducing the radiation levels in the plant, cleaning up the area and getting into it.

FORD: Well, if the equipment disablement isn't clear to you yet, how are you certain that the plant is now safely under control?

CREITZ: Well, the radi -- I would say that our surveillance, the checks on radiation and so forth, indicate this.

FORD: It's under control at the moment but without knowing what equipment has been disabled, how do you know you can keep it under control?

CREITZ: Well, I believe we can -- several things have happened. Number one, we were able to reduce the temperature in the -- in the primary system at this time. The radiation levels in the containment vessel have not increased.

FORD: But they're still quite high.

CREITZ: They're still quite high.

FORD: And the leak is continuing?

CREITZ: And the radiation level on the outside of the plant is considerably less than it has been. We will not proceed to go into that plant or to do anything that will endanger the safety of our people, so our procedures are very rigid and this is why the record of the nuclear industry for the past twenty years has been so good.

GREGORY: Mr. Creitz, with so much controversy over levels of radiation that are safe how can you be absolutely certain that no worker or no person that lives in that area has been contaminated?

CRAIG: Well, I recognize it's a difficult opinion. I guess the scientific world, there's always been differences, and we think that's good. I think it keeps most of us that have to operate facilities like this on our toes so we do a better job. The amount of radiation that's been released from the plant, the level is so far under what present regulations talk about that it appears -- appears to our people, and this will be a decision that the Pennsylvania Environmental Resources people will have to make and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, but our observations, based on federal standards, are that the level is ok -- very low, certainly would not endanger or injure any people in the area.

HARTMAN: Thank you. Mr. Ford, what is the potential here for catastrophe? I gather from what I'm hearing we have not had a catastrophic accident but what is the potential?

FORD: Well, I'm quite concerned that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the company, we've been following this very closely, have not yet made public information which would demonstrate that the plant is now satisfactorily under control. I'm not trying to create any panic. They may have this information but it hasn't been made public. Now, the overall problem here involves large scale radiation release, and the safety experts I think are all quite in agreement that a catastrophic accident isn't just going to happen out of the blue, that it would be preceded by smaller accidents, accidents which would disclose weaknesses, frailties in the system, accidents that would be warning signs that the safety precautions weren't adequate and that's what has happened, at a minimum at this plant. It's a major warning sign about the deficiencies and defects in the safety precautions in today's nuclear plants. We've gone through our files for the Three Mile Island plant and we have information about twenty-two other major safety problems affecting that facility and this...

HARTMAN: Let me ask you something, for a layman sitting here, it's awfully hard to put all this in perspective because we don't understand nuclear energy. We hear here sides, we hear you say one thing, we hear other safety engineers saying something else and those people who agree that nuclear energy is safe and it's being a terrific job and so forth. Are you satisfied that all the nuclear plants in this country should continue to operate this morning or not?

FORD: Well, I think that the studies we've done and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's own studies have exposed a wide array of elementary safety defects. Two weeks ago, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission had to shut down five plants because they belatedly recognized a safety problem affecting them. In January,

the Nuclear Regulatory Commission repudiated its own basic study which has been used to show that reactors were safe.

This country is facing a major nuclear safety crisis, and our feeling is that urgent safety repairs are needed at dozens of nuclear plants operating around the country.

HARTMAN: Excuse me, would you agree or disagree with that, Mr. Gretta?

GRETTA: No, I would disagree with some of the things that Mr. Ford has stated. The Nuclear Regulatory is a regulatory body and they look at, look after us very carefully, and any observations that they make are very seriously considered. I think the point that five nuclear stations were closed down and again I don't know the particulars of those plant designs, but it indicates that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission looks very closely and on a very conservative basis in making a judgement.

HARTMAN: You just said -- Mr. Ford's just said there are twenty-two major flaws in the system. Is that what you said?

FORD: These are identified by the government as major unresolved safety problems, specifically affecting the Nine(?) Mile point(?) plant. The question is how in the face of all these unresolved safety problems the regulators, whom you say are so cautious, allowed the plant to go into operation.

GRETTA: Yeah?

FORD: The fact of the matter is that the regulatory program has been exceedingly lax, that they have been so interested in seeing a large nuclear power program that they have compromised the safety of reactors in the interest of promoting the commercial prospects of the industry. That's the problem.

GREGORY: What about the safety details, Mr. Gretta?

GRETTA: David -- David, I think the record of the industry having seventy-two reactors in operation and never injuring any member of the public certainly speaks highly of the -- of the safety precautions that are followed in the nuclear industry. There are always means of improving the system, and we recognize these and as a result of the Brown's Ferry incident we're in the process of making certain changes. It doesn't mean, however, that are plant is currently not safe to operate, not at all.

HARTMAN: But we know it isn't perfect because this morning you're still waiting to get into that plant where there is excessive radiation at the moment, right?

CREITZ: That is right. We must admit that we cannot design a perfect mechanical device. You know, if our automobile systems would have the same safety requirements as the nuclear industry I'm afraid Henry Ford never would have produced his first automobile.

HARTMAN: Mr. Creitz, thanks for being with us, and Bettina, thanks very much.

CREITZ: Nice being with you gentlemen this morning.

HARTMAN: Mr. Ford, thank you for joining us.

ATTACHMENT G

"TODAY" Show
3/29/79

41 EAST 42ND STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10017, 697-5100

FOR A.A. SCHECHTER ASSOCIATES

PROGRAM TODAY STATION WRC/TV AND NBC NETWORK

DATE MARCH 29, 1979 7:46 AM CITY NEW YORK

BROADCAST EXCERPT

TOM BROKAW: The extent of damage from that accident at the nuclear power plant near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, still is being assessed this morning. This is the facility that we're about to show you; it is called the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission in Washington says radiation penetrated through walls that were four feet thick and it spread as far as ten to 15 miles from the plant. The reactor core apparently has been damaged somewhat; the extent of the damage still is not known. The accident occurred in the mechanism that we are showing you here. That is the valve that blew out in a water pump that cools the reactor and keeps it from overheating.

Well, with me in the studio to talk about all that today is Daniel Ford, an economist from MIT who heads the Union of Concerned Scientists; that's a private nonprofit group that monitors the nuclear industry. It's also been highly critical of it. And in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, right now is Walter Creitz. He is the president of the Metropolitan Edison Company, that's one of several utilities that run the nuclear plant that we're talking about this morning on Three Mile Island.

Mr. Creitz, why don't you bring us up to date on the situation this morning. How much radioactivity still is escaping?

WALTER CREITZ: Thank you, Tom. We do appreciate this opportunity to respond to questions like that.

The radiation measures that we have taken in the area surrounding the plant is substantially lower than what we had read yesterday. And, of course, the amount that we had read yesterday was a very minimal amount and certainly did not endanger any of the people that lived in the area of the plant.

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BROKAW: But I read that it has escaped; it's been detected as far as 16 miles away.

CREITZ: There has been radiation that has left the plant. Even under normal operations a small amount of radiation will leave a nuclear generating station...

BROKAW: Yeah, but this is more than a small amount by what you would normally have.

CREITZ: Well, it is a small amount in terms of what the federal regulations would indicate would be an amount of radiation that would be dangerous. The level, the additional level, is substantially more than what we call the normal background radiation. But it's still well under any point of concern as far as human safety is concerned.

BROKAW: One of the measurements of radiation is called a milioran(?). And there were, I'm told by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, 12 milorans within two miles of the plant. In the course of a year we take in only 120 by diagnostic X-rays and so on. So, it's still higher than just what you would normally get from background radiation.

CREITZ: I think that conforms with what we said, that the amount is considerably higher than the normal background, but still at a very low level.

BROKAW: Who has been radiated at the plant?

CREITZ: Anybody that is in the area of -- anybody that's on the plant site itself certainly has to be exposed to additional radiation. However, the amount of additional radiation is very closely monitored. Each of the workers contain instruments -- each of the workers have instruments on their bodies which measures the amount of radiation that they are getting. And certainly we are very concerned and do not permit anyone to -- have a radiation exposure that would be considered dangerous.

BROKAW: You've got a very high degree of radioactivity, however, in the containment room, don't you, Mr. Creitz?

CREITZ: In the containment room there is a very high degree of radiation. However, there are no people in the containment room.

BROKAW: But how are you going to get rid of that?

CRSITZ: Well, we're currently in the process of lowering the temperature of the reactor's cooling system, and as soon as that temperature gets down to a reasonable level and we're able then to pump out and cleanse some of the contaminated water that's in the reactor containment building, we'll then be able to proceed and have people go in to observe and make an assessment of what has to be done to put the plant back in operation.

BROKAW: Mr. Ford, are you as confident as Mr. Creitz is about the safe level of radioactivity at the plant?

DANIEL FORD: Well, I think at the moment things seem to be under control, but our concern is whether the reactor has in fact been satisfactorily stabilized, and whether the accident is over. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has not released very detailed information about this; hopefully they have information that indicates that.

BROKAW: What is the situation now with the reactor? Has it been stabilized? As late as six o'clock last night I'm told that it was not yet stable.

CREITZ: Yes, the reactor has been stabilized. We have now turned off the emergency core cooling system. We have one of the normal reactor pumps in operation, and by this process we'll be able to lower the temperature. The degree of radiation measurements taken outside the plant has been considerably lower.

FORD: Well, the information that we've received from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission indicates that there have been some serious problem in keeping that reactor under control. Because of the high radiation inside the containment, they're prevented from making what may be necessary repairs. And I think it's going to be a very difficult problem of keeping that leaking plant under control.

CREITZ: It will be, and we're going to work at it very cautiously. We do have a lot of concern about those that work there, and every step of the way we'll be very carefully analyze as we proceed into the plant.

BROKAW: Mr. Creitz, I want to now go over what happened yesterday. We had a malfunction of a valve that I am told was compounded by human error, or at least that's the information that Senator Gary Hart has received from the NRC, which is the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

CREITZ: No. What occurred -- a valve did fail. This in turn told the reactor that it no longer had need for the heat energy. The reactor went automatically -- went into the process to shut down. The rods dropped back into the reactor, as it was supposed to do. The pressure continued to build up, however, in the -- in the primary circuit. When the pressure got to a certain level, again, the automatic system took over and opened valves so that the pressure would not exceed the value that we had said would be maximum.

BROKAW: You mean there was no human error involved at all?

CREITZ: There was no human error involved in any of that procedure. We will certainly be very carefully looking at the whole events. We'll look at it extremely carefully together with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. We want to know exactly what happened just as well as everyone else.

FORD: I don't really think that that explanation washes. It doesn't make sense. Valves do not fail miraculously. Either it was designed improperly, installed improperly, or some other unexpected and unprotected against situation arose. The information that we have, looking through our files about this particular reactor facility, indicates that there are a number of other safety problems at that plant. We found information on at least 22 significant safety problems at that plant. And the whole question that this incident raises in our mind is how in the world is the federal nuclear regulatory program allowing large, commercial nuclear plants to operate in populated areas with known safety defects, with inadequate safety precautions. That's the question that needs to be answered today.

CREITZ: Perhaps -- let me put that in some perspective. I'm not aware of any serious safety defects at Three Mile Island nuclear generating station. But if it did exist...

FORD: Here in the Nuclear Regulatory Commission report.

BROKAW: But you've been shut down four times in the last year, Mr. Creitz.

CREITZ: If it -- if something was wrong with the plant, if there would be a safety defect, I can assure you that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission would shut our plant down.

BROKAW: But you have been shut down four times in the last year, have you not?

CREITZ: No, we have not been shut four times by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, we have shut down because of a condition, a malfunction of a piece of equipment. No one -- you know, we can't expect man to make a perfect mechanical device. And that's why protective systems are installed in case a system or a piece of equipment fails; the protection system will take over to minimize damage and certainly to take into account the safety requirements of the people that live in the area. The nuclear industry has for 20 had commercial reactors in operation. We have 72 of them doing a fine job, and we have not injured a single member of the public during this period of time.

FORD: Well, you're certainly not keeping up that record very well with the general emergency that's been declared at this plant. I mean, our information -- here in the Nuclear Regulatory Commission document. It's a catalog the size of a small telephone book, documenting dozens of major safety problems, 22 of which affect the plant that you're operating. And we believe that the nuclear program in the United States has reached the point of a safety crisis. We have plants operating which should not be operating. There are plants operating that need urgent safety repairs. And the question is what's going to be done about all this?

BROKAW: Mr. Creitz, two things. First of all, it was my impression before this accident that your backup systems were so sufficient that you'd never have an accident even of this magnitude, much less what it could lead to.

CREITZ: No, I don't think we ever said that. We said that we have backup systems and backup systems, and the backup systems did work effectively in shutting the plant down.

BROKAW: What about the future of the Three Mile Island nuclear plant? With all the contamination that you have in the containment housing there are you ever going to be able to operate it again?

CREITZ: Yes, sir, I don't have any doubt about that that we'll be able to put Three Mile back in operation. It's certainly most important that we do it as quickly as possible, but not overlooking safety at all. Nuclear energy is an important source of electric energy in this country today, and certainly every nuclear power plant that's in operation is saving this country hundreds of thousands of barrels of oil.

BROKAW: Mr. Creitz, thank you very much.

Mr. Ford, are you confident about the ability of the Three Mile Island nuclear plant...

FORD: I think there is quite a clear safety concern. I think all the experts agree that a catastrophic accident isn't going to happen out of the blue. It would be preceded by warning signs, and this is quite a warning sign.

BROKAW: This is a subject that we're all going to be dealing with over some period of time in the future as well.