In conjunction with our efforts to bring about legislative changes, we are acting to effect improvements within our existing authority. To this end, we have issued a policy statement which emphasizes the Commission's expectation that future reactors be standardized, and our staff is developing proposed changes to our rules to facilitate this policy. This rulemaking should, to the extent the existing statutes provide, bring us closer to a combined construction permit and operating license and allow design certification and pre-approval of sites to minimize the uncertainty associated with the regulatory process. However, full implementation of one-step licensing requires Congressional legislation.

Additionally, for the future, both the nuclear industry and the Department of Energy are working on a second generation of nuclear reactors, which we call advanced reactors. The Commission has issued a policy statement on the regulation of these advanced nuclear reactors so as to minimize regulatory complexity and uncertainty in the licensing process.

With regard to Advanced Light Water Reactors, our staff has reviews underway for several designs that have been proposed by suppliers or a consortium of suppliers to determine if the designs can be licensed under our existing regulations. This work is expected to be completed in time for the Design Certification Process of the next generation of Advanced Light Water Reactors in the early 1990's.

Also, the NRC staff is currently reviewing three advanced reactor designs that are being supported by the Department of Energy. These advanced reactor concepts include one Modular High Temperature Gas Cooled Reactor and two Liquid Metal Reactors. Safety Evaluation Reports for each design should be issued within a year.

Now, I would like to describe what I believe should be the proper relationship between the NRC and the nuclear industry to meet the challenges that lie just ahead of us. The mission of the NRC is to assure that non-military uses of nuclear materials in the United States are carried out with proper regard and provision for the protection of public health and safety, of the environment, and of the national security. I believe that the NRC and the nuclear industry share the common goal of protecting the public health and safety. The NRC attempts to address this goal through regulations and requirements. The industry attempts to achieve this goal through design, construction, operations, maintenance and management. It is important to emphasize that ultimately the safe operation of nuclear power plants rests with our licensees; in the case of nuclear power plants that licensee is the electric utility.

The role of the NRC then is to encourage excellence and self-improvement on the part of the industry, while pursuing our own regulatory responsibilities. NRC demands compliance with our regulations - we are strong regulators and we conduct prompt enforcement actions when warranted. While pursuing our goals, we maintain an arms length relationship with those that we regulate. This does not mean that we cannot communicate with licensees in a businesslike and professional manner. I believe that it is extremely important to communicate honestly and openly. Our objective is to be tough regulators, competent regulators, fair regulators always keeping in mind the trust and confidence placed in us by our fellow Americans to be mindful of their health and safety.

There are some who criticize the NRC for being "too close" to our licensees. On the other hand, there are those in the nuclear industry who think we do too much, that we over-regulate -- that we are too prescriptive and much too involved. We hear both extremes. Maybe that is good. I think that it means we are probably proceeding in the right direction.

I tell my people that I believe we should steer a steady course. No matter what criticism we get from either side, we are going to do what we believe is right. No matter what we decide, experience has shown us that we will not make everybody happy. However, we do not make decisions based on trying to make people happy. Our decisions are only based on what we believe is right to protect the public health and safety. As Chairman of the NRC I will continue to do everything in my power to assure that the NRC maintains the proper relationship with the industry we regulate and that we focus on our safety responsibilities to our fellow citizens.

The NRC and the nuclear industry have many challenges that must be met satisfactorily in the next few years. For example, disposal of radioactive waste - both high level and low level - and the aging of our nuclear plants, which involves consideration of plant life extensions and decommissioning. These are challenges that are getting NRC emphasis now, and progress is being made.

Finally, since I have discussed the role of the NRC in regulating power reactors, I also want to mention that we have other very important responsibilities. We regulate the safe handling and use of nuclear material by universities, hospitals and industrial uses. We regulate fuel cycle facilities, transportation of nuclear material and the storage of spent fuel and radioactive waste. Nuclear materials, properly used, can be of major importance to our national welfare. The Commission recognizes its serious responsibilities for assuring that, in these fields where nuclear material is used, as well as in power reactors, our licensees manage radioactive materials in such a way that the health and safety of the public is adequately protected.

In summary, I believe our country will need additional electrical generating capacity for the future in order to sustain economic growth and replace aging facilities. I believe it is well within the American competence to operate nuclear reactors responsibly and safely. Utilities will make the decisions on generation type, and they should carefully evaluate both the benefits and costs of the various energy options.

In my view, under the strong regulatory supervision of the NRC, the nuclear option in our country should be retained. Nuclear energy is an important element in our nation's energy supply. Our nuclear power plants can and must operate safely. If they do so, they will contribute to our growing economy, as well as to our independence, and therefore to our national security.

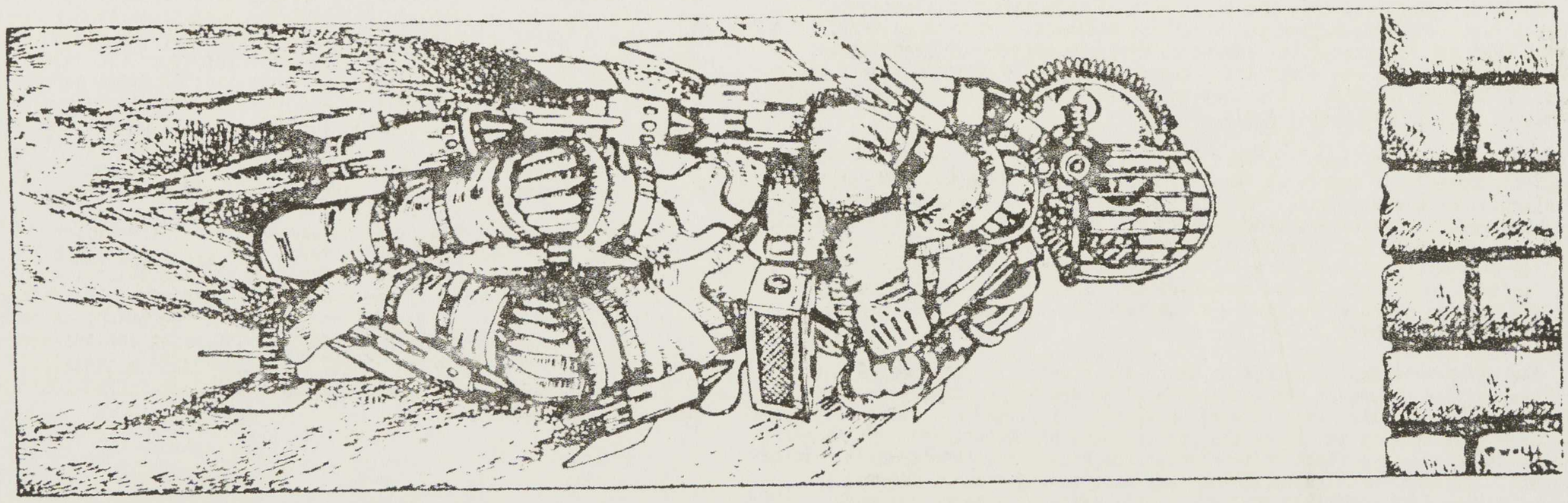
Thank you.

THERE THEY GO AGAIN!

This speech by the Chair of the NRC focusses on the industry's plan for a new generation of reactors. Included are notable quotes from DOE secretary Harrington and Bennett Johnston the Louisiana Democrat in charge of the Senate's Energy and Resources Committee. Public Citizen recently included him on a list of Senators with the worst voting record in Congress.

This document refers directly to the 8-8-88 senate vote that won 89-6 calling for the restructuring of the NRC. Other claims and plans for renewed reactor construction is mentioned throughout the document. This rebuilding plan has been in place since 1983 with a plans for new orders to start some time in the 90's when we start running out of cheap U.S. produced oil. The industry's smart media campaign is already geared to play on that coming oil shortage. We have also seen more reactor arguments as the solution to the global warming crisis as well.

The nuclear industry is developing the groundwork now for its plans for more reactors. It is important that concerned people locate materials that bring out the nuclear industry's plans and counter their arguments. If you are interested in distributing these materials please let us know.



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