Cloud Over Three Mile Island

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Insiders expect that President Carter has decided to downplay nuclear power in his energy speech for next week.

If the nuclear industry is seeking to restore the credibility lost in the wake of the Three Mile Island Syndrome, Metropolitan Edison, operators of the plant, showed no evidence of it in their handling of the incident. The mayor of adjacent Middletown, Pa., did not learn of the accident until several hours after the fact — and then only from the news media. Pennsylvania Governor Richard Thornburgh, who was responsible for any decisions regarding evacuation of the surrounding populous, was not told of radiocaesium releases planned by the utility until after they had been made. The federal government was not told either. As outlined in The Washington Post, NRC and utility spokesmen were simultaneously telling the press radically different stories.

To deal with these problems, the Senate should swiftly pass a bill proposed by Sen. Gary Hart (D-Colo.), under the bill, the NRC would assume control of a nuclear power plant in the event of a crisis. An integrated Federal disaster team would eliminate the problem of the left hand not knowing what the right was doing, and also eliminate any possible conflict of dollars versus lives.

The debate over nuclear power will be fueled by the Three Mile Island incident. Unfortunately, much of the opposition to nuclear power comes from anti-technologists, people who blindly attack "progress." Coal plants will produce a guaranteed increase in lung cancer deaths, and foreign oil is becoming more expensive and less available. Perhaps the Department of Energy will now give some real attention to solar energy. But the most promising energy "source" will not be used; the political reality is that only a small reduction in private automobile use will result from $1 or $2/gallon gasoline prices.

Meanwhile, the nuclear industry will attempt to follow the maxim of a recent president: you can fool most of the people most of the time, quickly whispering to anyone who'll listen, "... no one was hurt ... nuclear plants are safe ... the system works ..."

Dining proposal is arbitrary

To the Editor:

A movement toward standardization is inherent in any large operation, but when the organization is MIT it is to be hoped that the movement could be minimized. The proposed recommendation by the Committee on Campus Dining is such a movement. The stated goal of the CCD is to increase the varieties of student experience, but a mandatory common would have the opposite effect. A student who cooks for himself can increase his skill and vary his diet to suit his taste, but once on common he has little freedom of choice. The CCD's goal could be better served by recommending that cooking classes be made available and students encouraged to take them.

With the cost of schooling at MIT increasing yearly, the cost of eating on commons cannot be ignored. Individual cooking, when reasonable care is taken in shopping, is significantly less expensive than commons, as the CCD's own study has shown. And while the CCD has not yet finished its evaluation of the nutritional value of meals eaten by students who cook, the preliminary data seems to show that those students eat reasonably, if not as well as is possible.

Efforts like this one to "vary the experience" of students are arbitrary and costly. It would be less painful and more economical to simply issue uniforms or paint all students the same color.

Paul G. Riegel, '82

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