

IN SHORT

The system works!

The IRS estimates that last year 2,092 Americans were millionaires—up from 1,776 a year earlier.

Hung up

It was the next best thing to being there.

During a June 19 rehearsal involving a mock nuclear accident at the Dresden power plant, about 65 miles southwest of Chicago, safety experts had to resort to a regular telephone when the "disaster hot line" didn't work. According to an article in the *Chicago Sun-Times*, the hot line was supposed to alert at least six state and local agencies.

"I guess you could say I was a little upset," said Eric Jones, head of the Illinois Emergency Services and Disaster Agency.

The fake "disaster" included a simulation of what happened at Three Mile Island in March 1979. The session was held to train employees of the state and nearby counties who would coordinate operations in such an event.

Hamstrung

Advertising Age reports that ad industry execs have discovered the recession.

Budd Co. president James McNeal Jr. warned members of the Business/Professional Advertising Association that while America remains at "the top of the heap" when it comes to technology and productivity, its lead is shrinking. And he laid part of the blame to an overzealous regulatory system that condemns a product as "guilty until proven innocent."

John D. Caplan, executive director of General Motors Research Laboratories, pinpointed the sources of the problem: special-interest factions, especially Jane Fonda and activist-husband Tom Hayden, anti-nukers and environmentalists. "Too much democracy" has allowed such people to dominate "every issue of the day" and take their anti-science, anti-technology, anti-progress stand to "snail darter extremes," he grouched. "Overreacting in their zeal for risk-free solutions," the gadflies have created an atmosphere of fear, which has hamstrung the innovators.

Sorry service

The Secret Service has told Communications Workers union local leader Jane Margolis that it is sorry a "misunderstanding" led them to drag her out of the union's 1979 convention and hold her incommunicado while President Carter was addressing the gathering. Margolis, a delegate and Carter critic, had tried to introduce a motion earlier that day to disinvite Carter because of his anti-labor policies. Dozens of union officials and political activists rallied to the defense of Margolis and criticized the Secret Service move as a suppression of free-speech rights. In making its apology on June 6, the Secret Service also sent Margolis a check for \$3,500, which she donated to the union's defense fund.

NYC contracts update

New York's 240,000 non-uniformed city employees reached an early agreement with the Koch administration on two annual pay increases of 8 percent each, less than transit workers won after an 11-day strike this spring but close to what insiders had predicted (IN THESE TIMES, June 4). The city will continue an annual \$750 cash payment to each worker, but the union won a compromise on its demand to convert the payment into a rate increase that would also boost future pensions. The payment will be "rolled into" the base at the start of the next contract. Police and firefighters, who had demanded more than the coalition of other city employees, including the teachers, still were negotiating.

The costs of "freedom"

The Carter administration's "parole" of 129,000 freedom-seeking Cubans and Haitians is not getting the warmest response from state and local political leaders. Their constituencies must fork over 25 percent of the costs in providing medical assistance, special education and social services to these people for a year.

Meanwhile, back in Dade County, Fla., hundreds of homeless Cubans have been sleeping on cots in the Orange Bowl. The *Chicago Sun-Times* reports that most are young, single men who have been abandoned by their American sponsors and are ineligible, under Florida law, for many welfare benefits.

The stadium's assistant manager, Max Cruz, said he was worried that what one official has called the "Cuban Holiday Inn" might interfere with the Miami Dolphins' Aug. 15 National Football League exhibition game against the Detroit Lions.

Dick Nixon never would have let this happen.

—Josh Kornbluth and David Moberg



ERA has turned out the demonstrators—but not the needed votes.

ERA suffers another setback in long-running Illinois farce

The Equal Rights Amendment went to the floor of the Illinois House on June 18, even though ERA advocates had vowed not to take a roll call until they were sure of enough votes to meet this state's unusually stringent three-fifths majority rule.

The ERA vote had been postponed on May 14 when a headcount came up one short of the 106 needed. But Governor Jim Thompson and others had assured the pro-ERA forces that two Republicans were ready to switch sides. Yet as the roll call progressed it became clear that the amendment would still fail by two votes. Rep. James Taylor, a sponsor of the bill, quickly moved to postpone consideration, and that roll call was never completed. It is now unlikely that the ERA will come up before the legislature recesses.

While state and national media cleaned out their cache of clichés announcing the end of the road for the ERA, Illinois activists tried to figure out what had gone wrong. Rep. Gary Hannig, whose name had come up in connection with a bribery indictment brought against a pro-ratification volunteer (he was soon exonerated), changed his vote from yes to no. New Republican support did not materialize.

But Mary Jane Collins, president of Illinois NOW, explained the defeat less in terms of last-minute individual politicking than as a reflection of a broader shift to the right that has accelerated, particularly among Republicans, since Reagan gained a clear shot at the presidential nomination. That is a shift that the Illinois ERA campaign will be

working to reverse in district races throughout the state this fall. But they have opposed efforts to submit the ERA to a non-binding state referendum—a ploy, says Collins, to draw the ratification campaign into a costly media battle that would exhaust its resources and obscure other issues in the 1980 campaign.

—Lee Aitken

Safety first in New York

A strong bill giving workers the right to know of probable health hazards and dangers in their workplace sailed through the New York state legislature with only one "no" vote in the Senate and none in the Assembly, despite heavy business opposition. Gov. Hugh Carey hasn't said whether he will sign the bill into law, but the legislature would be likely to overturn any veto.

The bill, which was pushed by a broad community and labor coalition and initiated by the Western New York Council on Occupational Safety and Health (WNYCOSH), requires the commissioner of health to identify toxic and hazardous substances. Employers will have to give workers notice of known and probable hazards to their health or to their families' health that could result from working with the substances.

This would go well beyond a ruling made in late May by the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration that workers and their authorized agents must have access to workplace

medical records, such as records of toxic exposure or files on the potential harm of materials in the workplace. OSHA is considering requiring employers to maintain such material data files.

The New York bill covers private and public employers of all sizes and is stronger than anything in Canada or other parts of the U.S., WNYCOSH executive director Lee Smith said. With this legislation, Smith said, "workers will be able to take serious steps to protect themselves. It also makes employers know workers aren't going to leave control of the workplace to the employer. I think it will lead to control of the workplace as a bigger issue. It also shows labor can win if it takes the offensive."

—David Moberg

Nader troops raid Hollywood

Ralph Nader's moving into feature film and TV production—but don't expect to see "Consumer's Angels" on your tube right away.

Still in the first stages, the production company-in-the-offing plans to make films and TV programs that offer insight into social problems and inspire people to fight for the public interest. "Films like *Norma Rae*, *The China Syndrome*, *All the President's Men* are good examples of models for us," said lawyer Mark Litwak, who is moving to Los Angeles for the Nader organization to set up the company. Litwak has worked with Nader since 1972.

The raw material for entertainment drama is all in the Nader files, Litwak said. "We have incredible stories—not only what we've done, but stories that people have written to us about." Litwak plans to capitalize on the current entertainment trend toward "actuality programming," or use of real-life drama.

Plans for the big screen include films based on Lawrence Goodwyn's *The Populist Moment* and Robert Caro's *The Power Broker*.

Several TV-movie deals are already in the works. One concerns the "unbridled economic power a company has in a democracy, when it's a one-company town." Another concerns a group of students from an upper-class girls' school who investigate nursing homes.

The Nader group is also working on a pilot for a projected TV series based on Nader's *Raiders*. One of the stumbling-blocks is obtaining enough control over the series to keep it from turning into "Consumer's Angels," Litwak said.

Nader has also recently dipped into cable programming, with a public affairs program scheduled on Ted Turner's all-news format, and with a consumer program called *Ralph Nader: For the People*.

How firm are the movie deals? As yet, not very—Nader's production company will work with major studios, the holders of the millions of dollars necessary to make a movie. And since many more movies are talked about than made, nobody is waiting for the next *China Syndrome* come fall.

—Pat Aufderheide

IN THE NATION

NUCLEAR POWER

U.S. okays release of radioactive gas

By Greg Moyer

MIDDLETOWN, PA.

A HANDFUL OF ANTINUCLEAR groups have turned to the courts in a last-minute effort to block venting of radioactive Krypton gas from the reactor building at Three Mile Island.

A federal Appeals Court judge has agreed to hear charges on Friday, June 27, that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) steamrolled public opposition by scheduling the first venting for Saturday, June 28. The controversial release could come less than two weeks after the NRC order giving permission

Local frustrations over the accident and the clean-up have now focused on the Krypton, but the real issue is whether the plant will ever reopen.

for the plan became final.

The five NRC commissioners unanimously decided on June 12 to accept Metropolitan Edison's plan for releasing 57,000 curies of radioactive gas. The decision did not become legally binding until it appeared in the Federal Register June 18. Customarily, an agency waits 30 days for appeals before an order is carried out.

Further anxiety gripped residents of south-central Pennsylvania this week when a report prepared by West German scientists cast doubts on the actual composition of the gas to be released. Contrary to NRC assessments, the West Germans claimed that its high concentrations of radioactive particulates may pose a greater health hazard than the Krypton-85 gas.

NRC officials deride the West German findings, noting that the scientists worked from data shown to be inaccurate in recent tests of the containment atmosphere.

Steven Scholly, an instigator of the suit and a staff member of the Three Mile Island Legal Fund, hopes the judge will force the NRC commissioners to hold a formal hearing where diverse viewpoints on the venting plan can be heard. Scholly does not believe that the shortened appeals period was an oversight. He reasons that the NRC wants the Krypton issue behind them before open hearings July 7 on the technical specifications of the damaged reactor. That set of hearings would be a natural opportunity for citizens to raise questions about the venting plan.

Unabated stress.

Not surprisingly, two recent independent studies have shown that the psychological stress associated with TMI has not disappeared in the months since the

accident on March 28, 1979. One report speculates that 10 to 20 percent of the population living near the plant—about 20,000 to 40,000 people—exhibits symptoms of physical or psychological strain related to the near meltdown.

But despite recent challenges to the wisdom of venting, the focus of people's fears seems to have shifted.

"The real issue is whether the plant will ever open again," said Don Hossler, a leader of People Against Nuclear Energy (PANE). Hossler, who edits the PANE newsletter, said the frustration goes beyond the health effects of Krypton-85. The venting plan crystalized people's anger, he explained, but it was hardly the sole cause of their concern.

Middletown councilman Andrew Burger seems to agree.

"The people are frustrated about everything involving the accident and the clean-up," he said. "They just took it out on the Krypton."

Apparently Governor Thornburgh takes a narrower view. At a press conference recently, he backed the venting of Krypton-85 according to the NRC plan, stating that "the sooner the matter is resolved, the sooner the stress is resolved." He cited one paragraph in the Union of Concerned Scientists' report—a report that he commissioned—to buttress the recommendation. The five UCS scientists agreed with the NRC and the utility that there would be "no health effects from ground release venting." Dosages would fall in the range of 5 millirems. (The annual permissible exposure, according to the government, is 75 millirems.)

What Gov. Thornburgh chose to downplay were the major findings of the UCS study:

- that citizens need not be exposed to radiation in the amounts anticipated by the NRC plan.
- that the NRC should evaluate two al-

ternative techniques suggested by the UCS for venting the Krypton-85 as well as reconsider two Krypton recovery technologies already rejected.

•that the removal of Krypton should occur within one year and that it be done by whatever method best safeguards the health and safety of the local people.

Other ideas.

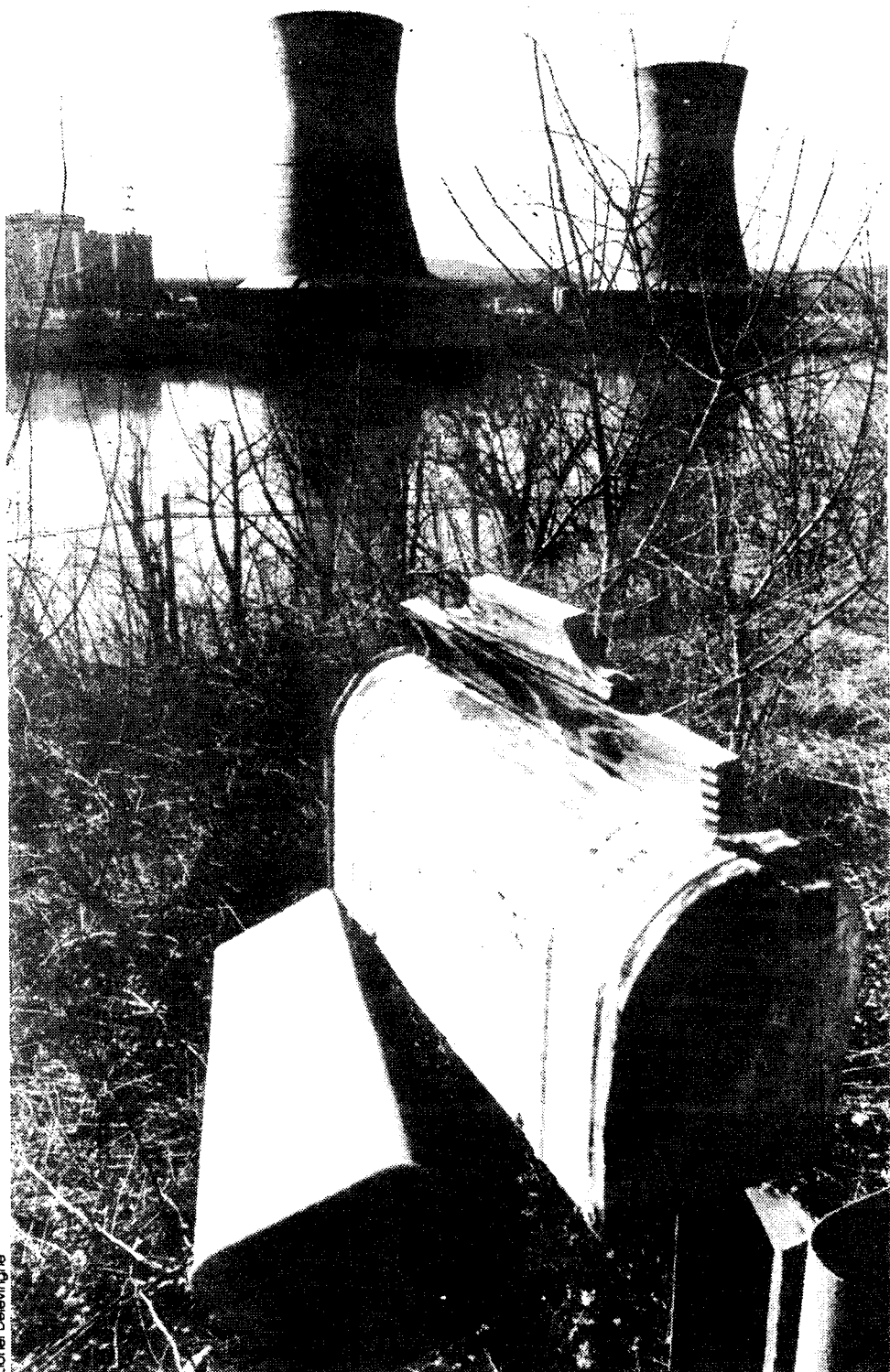
The specific suggestions of the UCS panel for handling the Krypton bear little resemblance to the NRC's high technology fixes.

One UCS idea calls for building an in-

cinerator with a 250-foot stack to heat the gas as it is vented. Elementary physics teaches us that warm air rises. The UCS scientists estimate that the hot gas would rise and disperse at an altitude equivalent to venting from a 1,000-foot stack. Currently, plans call for venting from a 160-foot stack, virtually guaranteeing that surface winds will blow the Krypton earthward.

The second proposal combines scientific imagination with a flare for political symbolism. UCS suggests suspending a 1,500-foot reinforced fabric tube from

Continued on page 8.



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