► In a number of cases there appears to have been insufficient management participation and involvement in the day-to-day operation of the facility—particularly in safety related activities.

► Fully effective quality assurance programs have not been sufficiently developed or implemented.

One page later the report notes that fuel rods in some nuclear plants are not holding up as well as "anticipated or desired," and that some of the fuel rods are leaking a bit more radioactive waste than they should be. It is left to the reader to learn elsewhere that severe and unexpected damage to fuel in several reactors has been the subject of a major investigation by the AEC regulatory staff for the past 6 months and is expected to lead to temporary cuts in the permitted power output at a number of nuclear plants. Thus, oddly, the report plays down not only the seriousness of fuel problems but also the presumptive caution that the AEC has exercised in handling the matter.

Similarly, several other past and current problems receive glancing, if not cryptic, mention with no attempt to explain their implications for public safety. For instance, it is noted that a "relatively large number" of valves in reactor safety systems have malfunctioned over the years. The gravity and extent of these malfunctions, however, may be somewhat greater than the report's one-sentence reference suggests. Last July, two workers at the Virginia Electric Power Company's Surry nuclear plant were killed in the act of inspecting a set of malfunctioning valves when still another valve exploded. (An AEC investigation attributed the explosion to improper design in a piping system, another generic problem that has recently reared its head in the reactor business and which receives only oblique mention in the commission's comprehensive safety report.)

Moreover, before and since the accident, AEC regulatory officials have been conducting the nuclear equivalent of an automotive recall, in a nationwide search for potentially defective valves of a type widely used in "safety-related systems." In letters to a number of utilities, the AEC has asked reactor operators to search their records to determine whether or not the metal walls of the valves in question are—as suspected—thinner than safety standards allow. To the dismay of regulatory authorities, some utilities are having a hard time determining whether their plants use the valves at all, much less whether the valves are defective.

Still another investigation under way, and one not mentioned in the report, concerns the placement of the huge steam lines that connect power reactors with nearby turbines. An anonymous letter alerted the AEC last fall to the fact that a steam line of the Northern States Power Company's nearly completed Prairie Island plant in southern Minnesota snaked through an auxiliary building housing vital safety equipment. With the belated thought that a rupture of the steam line might cripple the plant's ability to control subsequent events, the AEC is thinking about ordering Northern States to move its line. The AEC is also asking other utilities to look for similarly placed lines, and

Moss Heads Senate Space Panel

The Senate seniority system allows few surprises, but the reshuffle of committee assignments at the beginning of the new Congress has produced at least a mild one with the naming as chairman of the Senate Aeronautical and Space Sciences Committee of Senator Frank E. Moss (D–Utah), who has never served on the committee before. As it happened, all the eligible Democrats serving on the space committee would have had to give up desirable assignments on other committees to assume the chairmanship and were unwilling to do so. By moving to the space committee, Moss, who was elected to the Senate in 1958, gets his first chance to head a major committee.

Moss, who succeeds retired Senator Clinton P. Anderson (D–N.M.) in the chairmanship, is hardly a random choice for the post. Moss served in the Judge Advocate's branch of the Air Corps during World War II and retired a few years ago as a colonel in the Air Force Reserve. In the Senate he serves on the Commerce Committee's subcommittee on aviation. He has been a staunch supporter of the space program and backed the space shuttle.

In a statement made when he took the chairmanship Moss noted that "Aerospace is important to this country. It is the leading industry in Utah and, therefore, of vital interest to my constituents. A spokesman from Business Research at the University of Utah advised me that there are 19,000 jobs dependent upon aerospace industry in Utah."

In view of cuts in the space budget and lowered horizons for NASA there has been speculation that the space committee might not continue as a major Senate committee. The appointment of Moss as chairman appears to remove the question.

The space committee chairmanship had been expected to go to Senator Stuart Symington, who does not hold a major committee chairmanship. Symington is the only senator to hold membership on both the Armed Services and the Foreign Relations committees, however, and was unwilling to give up membership on one of the committees, as the rules require, to assume the space committee chairmanship. The remaining Democratic members of the committee, senators Warren G. Magnuson of Washington, John C. Stennis of Mississippi, and Howard W. Cannon of Nevada all now head major committees. Moss gave up his membership on the Interior committee to take his new post. Also going to the space committee as a new member will be freshman Senator James Abourezk (D–S.D.).

Moss reportedly is looking for ways to make the space committee more active, particularly in matters of science and technology, and is said to be contemplating changes in the committee staff. As a "science" committee, Senate rules give the space committee jurisdiction over scientific aspects of aeronautical and space activities in NASA and other civilian agencies and, to a limited extent, the military services. The committee's purview, however, is currently more circumscribed than that of its counterpart committee, Science and Astronautics, in the House of Representatives, which, for example, is the legislative committee for the National Science Foundation.—J.W.