



14 November 2006

Dear Professor Szatmáry,

I have seen your letter to our President and Rector, Prof. Elkana, questioning certain professional knowledge of our colleague, Prof. Illes. The reason for this questioning, in my understanding, was outcome of the public debate on nuclear issues in which Prof. Illes was involved. I want to make just a few points:

1. Prof. Zoltán Illés does not teach nuclear physics at our university. At CEU subjects related to nuclear energy are taught by Prof. Sabina Torok from the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Professor Illes teaches courses related to solid waste management, environmental politics and public ecological movements. As far as I can understand, in the TV program you are referring to in your letter, our colleague did not act as an expert on nuclear energy.
2. The TV show assumes that this is not a formal scientific meeting or a conference, but rather a public debate, where scientists should be able to address concerns of the general public. Public can be ignorant or not knowledgeable, it may have strange prejudices and misconceptions, and the role of a science expert, like yourself, during such a show would be to address these concerns and give an expert's view on the subject. Again, as far as I can understand, Prof. Illes during that meeting was introduced as a "green politician", in other words, a person who should be able to articulate those public concerns. The role of science expert would be to address them, and try to convince the audience that the views provided by the expert are actually correct.
3. I am sorry I have not seen the actual debate, therefore my interpretation of it is based on your letter as well as on communication with Prof. Illes.

Yours sincerely,

Ruben Mnatsakanian
Professor, Head of Department