



Newsletter

October/November 1992

COAL DEBATE CASTS SHADOW OVER NUCLEAR FUTURE

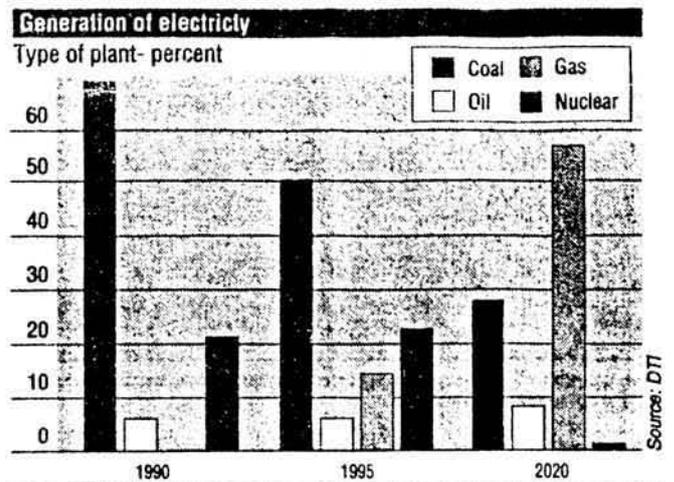
Uncertainty about what future there is for nuclear power in Britain has been increased by the recent debate over the threatened closure of 31 coal pits and the promise of a government review of fuel policy.

First sign of a shift was a report (*Guardian* Oct.8) that Nuclear Electric did not now expect to get public funding for new reactors after Sizewell B in Suffolk. Instead, it would have to look to private investors to fund further power stations like Hinkley C. The company was also reported to be trying to offload its eight ageing Magnox stations into a separate government "ghetto" in order to give it greater financial freedom. Given the high capital costs and uncertain economics, private funding for new nuclear stations still looks an unlikely proposition.

Even worse news emerged from the debate about Britain's energy policy which followed the government's announcement that 30,000 mining jobs would have to go because there was no market for the coal. Projections by the Department of Trade and Industry, which has been responsible for energy issues since the general election, showed that whilst gas-fired power stations could vastly increase their share of electricity generation over the next 25 years, largely at the expense of coal, nuclear would also suffer.

The DTI projection showed nuclear energy reduced to only a token contribution by 2020, with gas producing over 50% of Britain's electricity. The clear conclusion

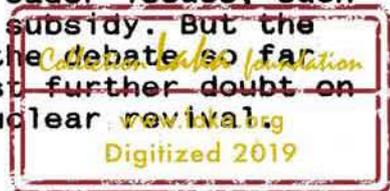
from this was that, with all the older Magnox and AGR stations closed, Sizewell B would be the sole survivor from Nuclear Electric's grand expansion plans.



The coal debate also laid bare the way in which the supposedly free energy market has been rigged in favour of nuclear power. Whilst Britain's coal reserves have been allowed to sink under market pressures for the regional electricity companies to build gas-fired stations and for cheap imports of open-cast coal, Nuclear Electric continues to receive state support to the tune of £1.2 billion, an 11% tax on everybody's electricity bill.

One suggestion made during the coal debate was that the Magnox power stations, like Hinkley Point "A", should be shut down so that a greater market could be given to British coal - and more mines kept open.

It is still unclear to what extent the review of the coal pit closures promised by the government will look at broader issues, such as the nuclear subsidy. But the end result of the debate so far has been to cast further doubt on any dramatic nuclear revival.



SHE NEWS

COORDINATOR STANDS DOWN

Danielle Grunberg has decided to stand down as Coordinator of Stop Hinkley Expansion at the end of this year. She is going to devote more time to writing, and to the East-West twinning project which she recently launched (see separate item).



Danielle Grunberg with an energy-saving light bulb she presented to the Hinkley C Inquiry Inspector.

After hearing Danielle's announcement, the SHE committee decided that it would not, for the moment, look for a replacement. It was considered that SHE would be able to operate satisfactorily with its other existing officers, at least until it was clearer what would be happening about the 1994 review of nuclear power.

Danielle has been involved in anti-nuclear activities in Somerset since well before the creation of SHE in 1983. She became Joint Coordinator with Crispin Aubrey in 1987, and played a major role in fighting the Hinkley C public inquiry during 1988-89. She has been the sole Coordinator since 1990.

On behalf of all SHE supporters, many thanks Danielle for all your many years of hard work and commitment!

NEW MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Judith Campbell is to take over from Lynn Collins as Membership Secretary. Lynn, who lives at some distance from the SHE office, wants to spend more time on other activities. Judith is already the SHE Treasurer. The SHE correspondence address remains the same. Thanks also to Lynn for her several years' efforts for SHE.

IDEAL ENERGY EXHIBITION

The Ideal Energy Exhibition travelling display is about to start a tour of Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire. The towns of Bedford, Watford, Rickmansworth, St.Albans and Welwyn Garden City are just some of the places it will be visiting during the month-long trip.

This will be the last tour undertaken by the IEE with the support of SHE. Unfortunately, the high operating costs mean it is no longer possible for us to continue. However, it is hoped to find another organisation willing to take over the exhibition. For further information, please contact Claire Dorling (0454 418596).

HINKLEY C TIME CAPSULE

On Sunday, August 23rd the Yeovil Quaker Group buried a time capsule containing information about the Hinkley C public inquiry and the protests against the proposed reactor. Inside the capsule were a cloth elephant representing the power station, five SHE badges, a green "Say No To Hinkley C" car sticker, a handful of newspaper cuttings and an assortment of leaflets.

The capsule, wrapped in several layers of plastic, is now under the Quaker burial ground. If dug up in years to come, it will give people an idea of how and why the protest happened.

Gail Tomlinson



CAMPAIGNS

EAST-WEST TWINNING PROJECT

Good news from both sides of Europe! Since the initial launch of the project, four UK groups have now twinned with East European partners and another five are waiting in the wings.

Scotland Against Nuclear Dumping has twinned with a group in Murmansk, near the Arctic Circle. People producing the NATTA renewable energy magazine have linked up with the Romanian Friends of the Earth group. The founder of this group is about to start a pilot project, setting up a wind turbine, a solar energy collector and a water treatment plant in a fishing village on the River Danube delta. Two local FoE groups have also been twinned with activists from Lithuania.

Thank you especially to SHE member groups which have joined this project. If you are interested in joining, there is still time for a twinning. Please contact Danielle Grunberg, Manor Farmhouse, Wembdon, Bridgwater, Somerset TA5 2BB (0278 422632).

"STOP SELLAFIELD 2" LATEST

Permission for British Nuclear Fuels to start operating their new THORP plant at Sellafield has been delayed. The government's pollution watchdog, HMIP, has rejected a request for commissioning of the plant to start in December.

According to the *Guardian* (24.10), the pollution inspectorate has been backed by Environment Minister David Maclean, who argued it would be "crazy to allow THORP to begin until authorisations for radioactive releases into the atmosphere and sea had been reviewed."

A public consultation period over those authorisations is now expected to start in mid-November. According to Greenpeace, 27,000

objections have already been received. There is still time to register your opposition to discharges which will massively increase radioactive discharges from Sellafield by writing to: Mark Mardell, HMIP, Mitre House, Church Street, Lancaster LA1 1BG with a copy to: David Slater, Director and Chief Inspector, HMIP, Romney House, 43 Marsham Street, London SW1P 3PY.

NUCLEAR NEWS

CUTBACKS AT HINKLEY POINT

Hinkley Point has been told to cut its running costs by 30% as part of Nuclear Electric's drive to make its power stations more economic. The immediate result has been the offer of voluntary redundancy to older staff, although even those over 40 are said to have been offered early retirement. Many workers are angry at effectively being pushed out.

If all the cuts were made through staff redundancies, about 300 of the 1500 staff would have to go. Instead, economies are being made in many different areas. It is uncertain what effect this might have on safety.

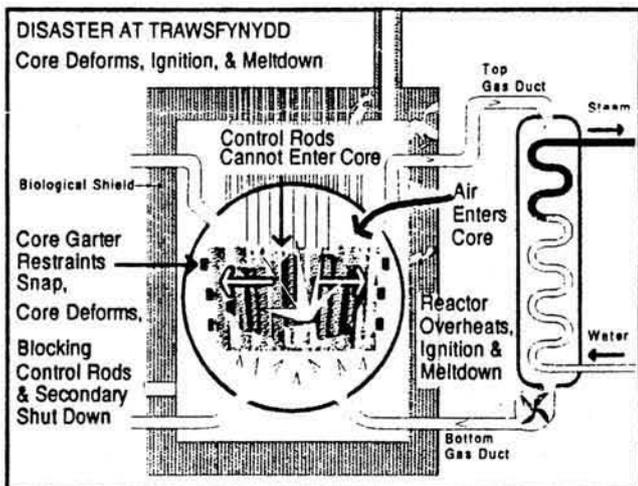
TRAWSFYNYDD STILL SHUT DOWN

The Nuclear Installations Inspectorate has so far refused permission for Nuclear Electric to restart the Trawsfynydd Magnox power station in North Wales. This is despite a confident assertion by the company that it would be given the go-ahead for a trial period from November 1st.

Both Trawsfynydd reactors have been shut down since February 1991 after the discovery of embrittlement in their steel pressure vessels. The same problem has been found to a lesser extent at Hinkley A.

Nuclear Electric has been making inspections of the pressure vessel exterior with remotely controlled

robots, but is unable to reach more than about 25% of the surface area. It is still hoping to use this data to support its case for extended operation at Hinkley A as well as in Wales. Local anti-nuclear groups are concerned that the most dangerous time for the reactor could be when it is starting up, and the metal is at its most brittle. They warn that a catastrophic accident could result from this, as well as other ageing problems.



The Welsh Anti-Nuclear Alliance held a protest rally in Caernarfon in October attended by hundreds of people. SHE sent a message of support. Members of the group have also held discussions with NII officials. From these, it appears unlikely that Trawsfynydd will gain any approval to restart before the end of the year.

More information on the campaign to keep Trawsfynydd shut (including an excellent background leaflet) is available from WANA at PO Box 1, Llandrindod, Powys LD1 5AA.

TAKE THE HEAT OFF...

The latest issue of *Which?* magazine (October 1992) has a useful article about how to cut your home heating bills by a range of energy-saving measures. Detailed information is given on draught-proofing materials and thermostatic radiator valves.

The article also points out that you can have an energy rating done

on your home under either the National Home Energy Rating scheme or the more basic Starpoint system for between £60 and £150. South West Electricity has been offering a Starpoint survey for £40 - or for free if you carry out the work they recommend within six months.



Energy Action Grants Agency
PO Box 1NG
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE99 1NG

Energy Efficiency Office

A grant is available for certain basic insulation work - roof insulation, tank and pipe lagging, draught-proofing doors and windows - provided you are eligible for certain state benefits. These are either Income Support, Housing Benefit, Family Credit or Community Charge Benefit. Work up to a value of £300 is done provided you pay a small contribution of £16. The approved contractor for this work in Somerset (known as the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme) is WS Installations of Highbridge Tel: 0278 782640.



A Very Happy Christmas 1992 and a Nuclear-Free New Year to all SHE supporters.



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