



## Newsletter

March 1997

**SHE INITIATIVES** for the coming year were discussed at the AGM on 17th March, and we are grateful for the suggestions and comments we have received. We are looking at ways to raise public awareness locally of the risks from radiation, and would like to put together the evidence from various studies as a follow-up to the factsheet. Dr Chris Busby, of the Low Level Radiation Campaign, is going to study radiation and childhood leukaemia mortality near Hinkley and this will be compared to the findings in Dr Cameron Bowie's report which showed an excess of cancer in the area ten years ago. Studies near other nuclear sites are, not surprisingly, showing similar results, and some of the researchers will be presenting their findings to the Low Level Radiation and Health Conference in Bristol on 19th/20th July.

**RADIATION AND HEALTH WORKER CONTAMINATION** - At Sellafield the Magnox reprocessing plant is out of action from December till August 1997 for a £130 million refit. In February six workers were showered with radioactive dust and sent home - the 6th level 2 incident since 1990 - a serious matter which implies a need for review of plant safety. The following day another level 2 incident occurred.

Radioactively contaminated water was washed from the roof of a storage tank building into a rainwater lagoon - the contamination on the roof being caused by a faulty valve. Clothing and footwear of four workers became contaminated. This area was criticised a year ago by the Health and Safety

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Next meeting 6th May, 8pm  
all welcome

Executive for lack of maintenance and the battle is intensifying against the radioactive pollution coming from Sellafield, THORP and the other nuclear industry sites in Cumbria. BNFL are asking for a six-fold increase in aerial discharges with just a small reduction in sea discharges to compensate, to which many people are saying that reprocessing should be stopped instead. The high level waste produced during reprocessing is kept in storage tanks and the Nuclear Free Local Authorities are warning us that they could cause a worse accident than Chernobyl. They propose that liquid wastes should be converted to solid matrix to remove the risk of a run-away disaster, and that Thorp and Magnox reprocessing is suspended while the waste is dealt with. The search for suitable high level waste sites, which has been going on for fourteen years in the US without success, has yet to begin here, and we have one of the world's largest stockpiles.

**NIREX MISLED THE GOVERNMENT** - Mr Gummer was told by the Radioactive Waste management Committee that assurances about scientific data were not true and he was urged to abandon

plans for the rock laboratory 1000 feet under Sellafield.

The safety case for the intermediate level waste repository was blown by NIREX's own Director of Science who said he had reservations about it. On 17th March the Department of the Environment announced that the proposal had been turned down and Mr Gummer remains concerned about the process of site selection as well as the technical deficiencies in the proposals.

NIREX was set up to look for waste sites and sell the idea of a depository to the public, but all previous suggestions have had to be abandoned due to fierce opposition, Cumbria and Dounreay being the only places where it is remotely acceptable. Even the hole in the ground at Drigg, supposedly just for low level waste, is causing concern and the people of Cumbria are increasingly demanding proper consultation about proposals for waste management.

The Nuclear Free Local Authorities are urging the authorities to consult publicly on all options for high level waste management which is an issue that everyone should be worried about especially if they start looking for sites in other areas of Britain.

**THE LINGERING RADIOACTIVITY** in Cumbria and North Wales may not be just due to Chernobyl. Researchers suggest that pollution may be accumulating; first the Winscale accident, then Chernobyl plus nuclear weapons fallout and natural radiation. Scientists are beginning to understand the process by which caesium in grass on poor pasture is renewing itself in the roots so that it persists for much longer. A lot of radioactive meat and milk has probably entered the food chain especially in the days before anyone began to monitor or study radioactivity.

## **DOUNREAY EXPERIMENTAL MELTDOWN**

Government papers from the 1950's show that the Atomic Energy Authority was worried about the safety of nuclear plants so scientists proposed that a reactor be built in a remote district then allowed to run out of control to see what would happen. The Dounreay MP thought his area suitably remote, being thinly populated so the nuclear "accident" would "disturb as few people as possible". It is not known whether such an experiment took place, but there is evidence that the AEA officials have been breaching discharge and waste storage rules for 20 years, exposing workers to radiation and blasting particles on to local beaches. Managers have now been told to cut the amount of waste being pumped into the Atlantic and start emptying the 30 year old shaft of unstable waste. Labour plan to investigate what is going on there, and this could lead to Dounreay's closure.

## **FRENCH NUCLEAR WINES**

Although the French are generally keen on nuclear power, they consider nuclear waste another matter. The plan to build a waste dump in the clay soil 1500 feet below the Cotes du Rhone vineyards at Chusclan is opposed by the wine growers guild because of the damage it will do to their image. The authorities are expecting the go-ahead from the National Assembly for two storage "laboratories" where vitrified waste from nuclear plants and high level waste from reprocessing operations at La Hague will be sent. By 2006 the "laboratories" are likely to proceed to their expanded use as underground storage sites. Although money given by the local nuclear industry to the community has won support in the past, the worldwide boycott of French

wines during the nuclear testing has worried people so much that the Chusclan town council voted against the plan.

France has begun distributing iodine pills to people living within three miles of nuclear stations - but how will they know when to take them? A French study of children visiting beaches near La Hague shows a three fold increase in cancer.

### **RADON TESTS**

are being offered by the DOE in Somerset, Devon, Bristol and Bath. Invitations to have a free measurement will be sent to all homes where there is a greater than 5% chance of being above the Government's action level because radon is believed to be second to smoking as a cause of lung cancer.

### **EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

The Nuclear Free Local Authorities group have looked into the state of arrangements for dealing with major nuclear accidents in the UK and have found that Britain is ill prepared for more than a small-scale incident, affecting just one to three km radius round the nuclear site. They advise that the Department of Health should promote wider distribution of iodine tablets and there should be better systems for warning the public.

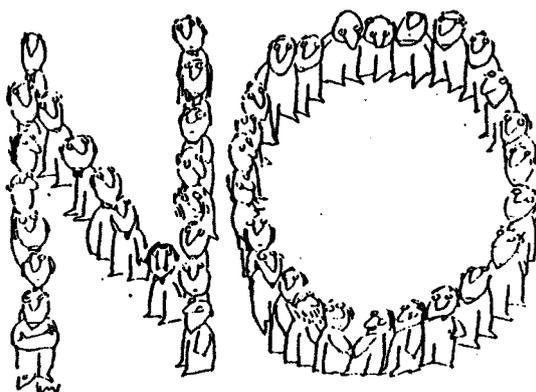
### **NUCLEAR INDUSTRY**

Where no new nuclear power stations have the go-ahead, there is pressure on BE from groups such as Stop Sizewell to give up the land they have acquired to environmental groups like the RSPB or National Trust. Stop Sizewell want the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate to talk to Magnox workers about their worries about safety. They are concerned that to make Sizewell A and

Bradwell economic more staff cuts may be required; the alternative being to shut down the stations because they are not economically viable.

The fate of old power stations has yet to be determined. Trawsfynydd was to have a "safestore" built over each reactor before the end of the decade, with possible site clearance after 2136. A pipeline is to take less contaminated "washings" into a nearby lake.

Planning permission and environmental impact statements are required but Magnox are resisting going into the matter as fully as local people want them to.



### **TRANSPORT OF WASTE**

has become a major issue here and abroad. The flasks go by rail ship or air, giving off radiation and risking disaster. In Germany tens of thousands of people defied a ban on demonstrations to prevent a shipment going by train from Southern Germany to a storage site at Gorleben. The containers included treated waste returning from the reprocessing plant at La Hague in France. They were prevented from leaving by protesters on the line and then had to be accompanied by 30,000 police. When they arrived in north Germany a battle commenced between demonstrators and riot police. Hundreds of farmers

used tractors to stop the lorries getting through to the site, which is just for temporary storage. A nearby salt mine is being considered for permanent storage, and that is making local people even angrier. The local fire brigade has been refusing to provide water for the police water cannon. In an opinion poll 61% wanted Germany, whose 19 nuclear power stations generate a third of its electricity, to abandon nuclear energy.

At Dounreay a complaint has been lodged that shipments from Australia breach Commonwealth policy and the waste transport by air from Germany may also have to stop while the suitability of the flasks is reassessed. In Taiwan protests by hunger strikers and a South Korean delegation are putting pressure on their government not to ship nuclear waste to North Korea.

### **CHERNOBYL**

It has taken a long time for the effects of the accident to become evident. A report in 1990 showed no big problem, but now studies of children up to 15 show that only 1% are in good health. Some of those affected by radiation linked diseases were not even born on 26th April 1986. At the end of 1995 the Ukrainian Government and Group of Seven industrialised nations agreed a programme for closing Chernobyl by the year 2000, but there is still disagreement as to whether it should be through completion of more nuclear power stations or development of alternative energy systems in the region. Meanwhile the Russian nuclear establishment disintegrates through lack of money. Near Moscow at the institute where the first European nuclear reactor was built in 1946 and the Russian bomb was

developed, workers continue to work, not for wages, but because they dare not abandon the site leaving seven reactors, two waste dumps and tonnes of uranium unattended. The Russian nuclear arsenal of 9,000 to 21,000 warheads is also in crisis as the Defence Minister has warned that he cannot guarantee the reliability of his nuclear control systems. At the Arctic nuclear shipyard workers have begun a strike over unpaid wages. In America a Miami businessman has been caught trying to import an atomic powered submarine from the Russian military for use by a Columbian drug cartell.

### **SUSTAINABLE ENERGY - WIND AND WILLOWS**

195 renewable energy schemes have been given the go-ahead by the Government to produce power for 1 million homes. They include contracts for off-shore wind turbines and 70 new contracts for landfill gas power, a technology in which Britain leads the way. Farming is merging with energy production using a machine which can plant thousands of willows an hour. 10,000 acres of fast growing willows, when fed into the power station at Eggborough in Yorkshire will satisfy the power needs of the local town of Selby.

Baywind, the only cooperative wind farm, are buying five turbines to generate electricity near Sellafield

**STOP HINKLEY EXPANSION ANNUAL REPORT 1996**

The Annual General Meeting was held on March 17th in the Pen & Quill, Taunton, and 8 members attended. Reports from Hester (coordinator), Val (supporters secretary) and Judith (treasurer) were presented and the election of officers resulted in the three of us continuing in our roles. Crispin helps with newsletter production and general advice, for which we are very grateful.

**Supporters secretary's report -**

We started 1996 with 305 supporters. 27 subscribers did not renew, which is much more than the previous year, no doubt due to the announcement that Hinkley C would not be built. Probably for the same reason 21 standing orders have stopped and the average monthly income is about 15% down. Other losses are due to no notification of change of address and death.

We ended the year with 250 supporters including 105 who pay by standing order and 45 gratis, though this list is being reviewed.

**Valerie Davey**

**Treasurer's report -**

SHE income from annual membership renewals and donations came to £808 in 1996, 45% down on the 1995 total of £1478 from the same sources. However, standing orders, which have always provided the greatest and most reliable source of income, were only 15% down from £5192 in 95 to £4445 in 96. A number of people wrote (some very kind letters) saying that, now that the plans for Hinkley C have been shelved, they felt their money could be used for other causes, and no doubt others cancelled their membership for the same reason.

Total expenditure came to £8851 - the first time for many years that we have had to dip into our capital reserves. At the last AGM members voted a grant of £5000 to the Low Level Radiation Campaign, of which £3709 was paid over during 1996. Apart from this, the day-to-day running expenses and newsletter production were well within the income we received during the year. There was £17089.13 at the bank on 31.12.96 compared with £20019.64 at the end of 95.

**Judith Campbell**

**Co-ordinator's report -**

At the AGM in March 1996 the election of officers was deferred until a replacement could be found for Crispin. There was instead a discussion on the future of SHE, in which it was felt that the campaign should continue at least until planning permission for Hinkley C expires in September 1997. I took over in June and, with Val and Judith continuing their responsibilities for membership and finance, we have carried on much the same as before.

We are monitoring the activities of Hinkley A and B, especially since privatisation has caused even nuclear workers to be worried about safety. Both reactors are carrying on past their sell-by date; Magnox stations until they are 40 and AGR to at least 30. We continue to promote the development of renewable sources of energy which are now widely recognised as a good idea, something SHE has been saying for a long time. Our involvement with the Hinkley Emissions Campaign increased due to Jim Duffy's departure. But although we were prepared to act if waste started coming here from Trawsfynydd for incineration, there is no sign that this is happening.

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Financial support to the Low Level radiation Campaign will continue and we are giving £1000 for a study of radiation and childhood leukaemia mortality near Hinkley during the coming months. The radiation factsheet has been produced and we would appreciate suggestions as to how these could be used. We would like to thank the people who have made suggestions and comments because this does help in deciding what our role should be.

**Our plans for the future** - to raise public awareness of the risk to health from nuclear sites; through the report on radiation and childhood leukaemia near Hinkley, which we will compare with Dr Cameron Bowie's report compiled ten years ago.

People have asked for another factsheet on the damage being done by radiation. Although it is hard to establish facts, there is much research, some of which will be presented at the Low Level Radiation & Health conference in July and we will try to put together a compilation of evidence after that - would anyone like to help?

We are giving financial support to this conference - in the University of West of England, Bristol, 19/20 July 1997 - but hope to be repaid after the event.

We are considering putting information on the internet!

- Our funds could be used more directly to promote sources of energy which are alternatives to nuclear. We are finding out about investment in the Baywind cooperative and will consider putting £5000 into this.

*Heed Nelson*

**INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT 1996**

<b>INCOME</b>		<b>EXPENDITURE</b>	
membership	594.00	fees	2662.50
SOs (m/ship)	4445.50	post/stationery/phone	329.76
donations	214.00	travel	266.65
photocopier	53.51	newsletter	390.03
postcards	2.00	photocopier	229.03
interest: current a/c	36.90	radiation leaflet	587.50
deposit a/c	575.06	AGM	124.26
		presentation to retiring coordinator	72.10
		audit	300.00
		newspapers	16.20
		donations - low level radiation	
		campaign	3709.25
		NEAG	50.00
		Green Help	100.00
		sundries	14.20
<b>total income</b>	<b>5920.97</b>	<b>total expenditure</b>	<b>8851.48</b>

AT BANK 1.1.96  
current account 981.43  
deposit account 19038.21  
25940.61

AT BANK 31.12.96  
current 4475.86  
deposit 12613.27

