



We decided to give between £100 and £250 to each of the groups mentioned in the last newsletter, and will report on what these campaigns are doing.

### **THE LOW LEVEL RADIATION CAMPAIGN AGAINST EURATOM**

This has had a major impact on the way the Directive is being implemented because the authorities are beginning to recognise the dangers of deregulating the disposal of radioactive materials. The Directive is being transposed into British law through the revision of the Ionising Radiation Regulations and the Radioactive Substances Act 1993.

There will be another round of consultation this Autumn and the campaign has produced a new leaflet describing the situation as it is now. The dilemma is about what to do with the growing pile of radioactive waste from old nuclear industry sites. Is there a level of contamination below which materials can be reused? It could then appear in household utensils, toys, building materials, and in the US it is already found in fertilisers.

Letters to politicians and regulators are still needed, urging caution as there is no safe dose of radiation - contact LLRC 01597 824771 for information.

## **Newsletter**

### **July 1999**

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**Next meeting 16th September, 8pm  
all welcome**

### **NUCLEAR WASTE SITES**

The Government seems to accept that it is better to store waste where it can be retrieved rather than deep underground. A new type of public consultation on Radioactive Waste Management took place in May. This was a Consensus Conference where a Citizens Panel were able to raise questions through expert witnesses, including Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace, and make recommendations on questions such as retrievability.

They concluded that radioactive waste must be removed from the surface and stored underground, but must be monitorable and retrievable. A neutral body should be appointed by the Government to deal with waste management. The criteria for selection of sites should be open and publicised. The public should be fully informed of the problems and solutions available, with decision-making open and transparent. Nuclear power should not be expanded until a way is found to deal with the waste problem. Existing international reprocessing contracts

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should be honoured but no new ones taken up. It remains to be seen how much the findings of the conference will influence eventual decisions.

## **IN AMERICA**

The Department of Energy is also trying to tackle the waste problem and has found two sites for high level waste disposal which, like the NIREX repository, may be convenient but not necessarily suitable. There is an urgent need to clean up leaking shallow landfills which are contaminating soil and water resources, so that development of the sites may go ahead on the basis that they are better than nothing. Other possibilities have been considered, such as a land-based deep repository, sub-seabed disposal or disposal under the Earth's crust, but the problem is not resolved.

A US company has made a proposal to ship spent nuclear fuel to Russia for long-term storage. This solution could be used by all Western countries, made attractive by a promise that it could help finance payments to Russian pensioners and orphans. It is proposed that half the proceeds would go to a programme to "support disposing of excess plutonium through the use of MOX fuel".

But the four sites for "deep disposal" will pose a risk to the Arctic ocean and Russian rivers if they leak and Russians have been demonstrating against the plan to import nuclear waste from other countries.

**NUCLEAR SHIPS** are already transporting materials all over the world, with obvious risks. After a recent fire in the engine room of a ship carrying waste from Liverpool to

Spain, which forced an emergency docking in Milford Haven, the local MP has called for information on the extent of nuclear transports off the coast of Wales to be made public.

## **BRITISH NUCLEAR FUELS £1.5 BILLION SELL-OFF**

The Government plans to sell off 49% of the company to create a public-private partnership, although not all ministers support the idea. This will make the private sector partly responsible for the cost of decommissioning the eight Magnox reactors, and although British Nuclear Fuels claim these costs are 90% covered, they could escalate. Buyers may also be unwilling to take on the reprocessing plants which have an uncertain future. However, if the MOX fuel plant is given the go-ahead it will make the deal more attractive. The sell-off is thought to be feasible because of the role British Nuclear Fuels is developing in the world-wide nuclear clean-up business. The Trade and industry secretary has stated that tough financial, environmental and safety criteria will be set, and he expects standards to improve in order to make the sale possible.

The MOX fuel plant at Sellafield is approaching the stage when it can start up. John Prescott has approved trial tests of the mixed oxide fuel rod production, but put off giving the licence until further consultations on the economic case for the plant have taken place. British Nuclear Fuels are confident about being allowed to proceed as they believe that the environmental and commercial arguments have been won already. A shipment of the fuel from the pilot plant, is about to leave Barrow-in-

Furness and transported to Japan, on heavily armed ships because it contains plutonium suitable for nuclear weapons that could easily be extracted. It is also likely to meet protesters along the way and when it arrives in Japan

### **COUNCILLORS VOTED ILLEGALLY**

Police have warned that some members of Cumbria County Council, who are employed by British Nuclear Fuels or married to employees, appear to have committed criminal offences by failing to declare an interest when supporting planning applications. The local government ombudsman is investigating links between councillors and the company after they voted in favour of the MOX plant.

### **WASTE IMPORTS FROM AMERICA**

British Nuclear Fuels has recently taken over the Westinghouse group, which manufactures fuel rods for US reactors, and it seems that they were making plans to import thousands of spent fuel rods to Britain without notifying the Government. Negotiations were kept secret because importation of fuel for storage is banned in Britain, so it was to be brought here supposedly for eventual reprocessing.

At the same time our energy minister was giving public assurances that no imports of waste would be involved. Documents leaked to Friends of the Earth show that detailed discussions about transports from three US nuclear sites were taking place, but British Nuclear Fuels have now stated that the negotiations were ended as soon as it became clear that the scheme would breach government policy.

### **DEPLETED URANIUM USED FOR WEAPONS**

These are manufactured by British and US companies for export and for use by our armies. This Uranium, which is left when enriched Uranium is separated from the natural substance, is used to make shells. When they hit a target and explode Uranium is released and will continue to emit deadly particles for millions of years.

These weapons were used in the Gulf war and in Kosovo, and the effect can be seen in Iraq where children are being born with deformities and cancers, especially if their fathers had been in areas of heavy bombardment, or if they live in areas where the shells were used. Gulf war veterans are also affected by cancer related illnesses and there is a high incidence of childhood leukaemia near places where these weapons have been tested.

For information about the Campaign Against Depleted Uranium contact Greater Manchester CND, One World Centre, 6 Mount Street, Manchester, M2 5NS 0161 834 8301

### **RENEWABLE ENERGY PIONEERS**

We can all do our bit in promoting sustainable energy policies as new products are introduced to save or create electricity, and some are becoming more affordable. Electricity generation accounts for about half the annual carbon dioxide emissions in the UK.

In addition to turning things off when not using them, we can fit new boilers, thermostats, and insulation; with some help from grants given by the Energy

Saving Trust. Individuals can even generate power for the national grid, by purchasing a new PV tile roof for £15,000.

### **THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT DOING ENOUGH**

Although they are committed to getting 10% of our electricity generated from renewable sources by 2010, the Government review has not done much to raise us from the bottom of the European league table; with just 0.7% of our energy coming from renewable sources at present. Here, we are paid 2.4p for electricity we create, but it costs us 8p to buy it, whereas in Germany people receive more than they pay if they contribute to the national supply.

We can opt for a green tariff and the extra money we pay will be used by the power company to buy electricity from renewable sources or to invest in research and development. However, the attitude that consumers must pay to be green is resulting in Britain falling behind other countries in all aspects of renewable energy production. The US government plans to install 500,000 PV roofs; Germany is building 100,000 and Italy is starting with a programme to build 10,000. We are committed to fit just 100 schools and 100 homes with PV roofs. Companies like BP and Shell, which are going into PV manufacture are, therefore, moving to the US and Germany.

IN BRITAIN our limited progress is coming about through the dedication of individuals. Nottingham university has built a "green" campus, which aims to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 75%, mainly through a new type of ventilation system which used the fact that hot air rises, and creates natural ventilation. On hot

days when it is necessary to power the system, this will come from solar panels on the roof.

### **THE EARTH CENTRE AT CONISBOROUGH, NEAR DONCASTER**

This millennium project is much cheaper than the Dome and is a visionary scheme designed to demonstrate what is possible; using renewable energy technology, reclaiming contaminated land and bringing work to an ex-coal mining community. They have created a "sustainable academy" where inert land has been turned to wetlands, drylands, bog, and vegetable pots, with willow and coppices for fuel. Visitors will go to the sensory trails, lake, playgrounds and Earth Galleries, aimed to provide fun and inspiration. They intend to keep expanding the project to create eco-housing, wind turbines and a technology and conference centre with Europe's largest solar roof.

**THE NATIONAL TRUST** are beginning to introduce energy efficiency into some of their properties but are opposing renewable energy schemes proposed by other people. A wood fuelled power station in Wye and a wind farm in Yorkshire were thought not to provide enough benefit to justify the intrusion on to the landscape.

**THE ATOMIC ENERGY AUTHORITY** who ended wave power research in 1983 by accidentally moving a decimal point so that it was 10 times more expensive than nuclear energy, are now working on renewable technology. They have developed a system for taking nitrogen out of wood smoke, so the first commercial wood-fuelled power station, near Selby, will not contribute to acid rain.