



## Newsletter

**November  
1999**

### **NOT THE END BUT A NEW START!**

Or is it the beginning of the end for  
Magnox?

In the last newsletter I outlined various options for the future, and I would like to thank you for responding so positively. Members feel that the organisation should continue, as there is concern about the safety of nuclear sites, recycling and 'disposal' of waste, and would like to know that there is someone who can respond to problems at Hinkley as they arise.

Instead of winding up the organisation we now have the chance to expand it into a campaign to stop Hinkley A, the Magnox reactors. Jim Duffey has offered to take up this issue and he is writing a description of his plan of action in this newsletter. In January when we send out renewal forms, we will contact people who have previously expressed an interest in matters concerning Hinkley, in addition to current SH members, offering a choice of subscribing to Stop Hinkley and receiving a newsletter, or giving a reduced subscription and getting campaign reports on the Magnox initiative.

The time would seem to be right for anti-nuclear activity to become more focused, while seeking to involve a wider range of people. Interest has been expressed in linking our organisation with the work of CND, Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace, and we would like to develop closer

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Next Meeting 12th January 2000  
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communication with other environmental groups in the South West. On a national level, Greenpeace are worried about the dangers posed by Magnox reactors - due to low level radiation, the risk of accidents as they get older, and the amount of pollution they cause as a result of reprocessing and waste creation. British Nuclear Fuels wish to extend the lives of Magnox reactors to 50 years if they can, and are experimenting with new types of Magnox fuel.

The nuclear industry faces major questions as it plans for the future and a local anti-Magnox campaign could be part of national pressure to confront the issues, in which the promotion of alternatives must also play a part. We are going to use our resources to promote the Hinkley A campaign until the AGM in March, when decisions will be made on the method of operation for the coming year, and your opinions are very welcome.

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The recent problems with the Magnox reactors are not helping their cause. Having shut them down for repairs and then extended the closure for new work to be done, British Nuclear Fuels are still unable to restart reactor 1. In addition it was found that filters were not working properly so the Environment Agency are now monitoring the foreshore, although they have not found readings above normal background radiation level. British Energy continues to report incidents in the AGR station and are being prosecuted in the magistrates court by the Health and Safety Executive for an injury to an employee.

#### **IN JAPAN**

On 30th September the worst nuclear accident since Chernobyl took place at Tokaimura. Three workers were injured, possibly fatally; at least 69 people were contaminated, and the accident threatened 300,000 people within a 6 mile radius. Its political fallout could affect nuclear industries worldwide if the public lose confidence in their claim to be safe. It was caused by workers at the plant who poured too much uranium solution into a tank, setting off an uncontrolled chain reaction. A hole was punched in the roof of the processing building and radiation levels went up to 4,000 times normal levels. The workers ran away when the alarms sounded and they did not know how to stop the reaction.

As it had been thought that this type of accident could not happen, there was no containment around the building. The plant is run by a private company that makes fuel for the fast breeder reactors, and the government had not considered it necessary to run safety checks there. Although the authorities

are now assuring the public that the area around the plant is safe, they do not know what to believe, and local farmers may find their produce unsaleable. There is considerable anger about the casual attitudes and lack of training which caused the accident and the delay in warning local people that it had happened.

A similar plant which processes bomb-grade uranium fuel for nuclear submarines just outside Derby has been severely criticised by the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate in a report which was leaked to CND.

#### **NUCLEAR TRANSPORTS**

Closer ties are being established between groups here and abroad which are campaigning to stop nuclear materials being transported around the world. They are challenging British Nuclear Fuels' aspirations to expand the amount of waste going to Sellafield from abroad.

Japan is an important customer of our nuclear industry and the first shipment of our MOX fuel arrived there the day after their accident. This fuel is the only use which has been found for the plutonium created by reprocessing, and the plant which makes it has not yet been given permission to start production. The Japanese government is already unsure about the future for this fuel, following disclosure that safety checks at Sellafield had been falsified.

**MEANWHILE, AT CHERNOBYL** the evidence of what nuclear accidents can do does not go away. The area near the reactor, abandoned by people, is now the Polesky Radioactive Ecological Reserve, where bison and boar live in a habitat still 40 times more radioactive than normal.

Dear Member,

From what you have already read you will know that I have been accepted, subject to the AGM, as co-ordinator of Stop Hinkley. I am very proud to be wearing that badge and will do my utmost to carry on the professionalism and hard work that Crispin Aubrey and Hester Watson have initiated. I would like here to outline something of my background (the committee members have a fuller C.V.), my relevant work co-ordinating the successful Hinkley Emmissions Campaign and more fully my proposals and current work on a SHUT HINKLEY 'A' campaign, which I hope will find favour with you all.

### My main career 1972 – 94

Psychiatric nurse, specialising in psychotherapy and reaching the level of Senior Nurse Manager with extra qualifications in teaching and management. I have worked at specialist units in Manchester and London and nine years with Somerset Health Authority (as it was then called).

### Community, Political, Anti-Nuclear Work

From my teens I have been active in these spheres beginning with the Secondary Schools Students movement moving on to CND and, for example, "Prestwich against the Missiles". I began a life-long involvement with meditation and became active in the Green Party attending national conferences, taking on administrative posts (Somerset Co-ordinator) and standing in elections, parliamentary and local. Recently, before moving to France for effectively three years, I helped set up Bridgwater LETS scheme and organised a successful 1-day conference in Bridgwater on a variety of environmental themes. Since returning from Paris this autumn I have not taken on any commitments other than Stop Hinkley.

I am married to a Belarusian woman who has personal experience of the health effects of Chernobyl, and we have a delightful 2 year old daughter. I have spent two months travelling in Belarus.

### Hinkley Emissions Campaign

Having learnt in 1995 that Nuclear Electric planned to freight from Wales large amounts of low-level waste for incineration at Hinkley Point,

I co-ordinated a campaign against this health hazard. With the help of colleagues from the Low-Level Radiation Campaign and many others and some finances from SHE, I organised public meetings, demonstrations, press releases and TV and radio interviews. We handed in a 1200 strong petition to a Dublin MEP who had been involved in the THORP inquiry, which she took to the European Commission for investigation.

The outcome of the campaign has been:

1. No waste has moved here from Trawsfynydd and BNFL have altered their national policy on this matter!
2. One of two newly built incinerators has been demolished without ever being commissioned!
3. As part of national relicensing of nuclear emmissions, the Environment Agency are pushing Hinkley to a massive reduction in the maximum levels they can incinerate. Hinkley have never put back on the table outline proposals that they "temporarily" withdrew in '95 for an 83 fold increase in emissions!

I feel that the contacts I made and greater understanding of radiation and the nuclear world during this campaign have greatly enhanced my suitability for work with Stop Hinkley.

### Shut Hinkley 'A'

Preparing for the latest Stop Hinkley meeting I found a recurring theme emerging for a forthcoming campaign. My colleagues in Wales advised me that Hinkley A, a Magnox, was built identically to Trawsfynydd which was forced to close due to public opposition and a well co-ordinated campaign eight years ago – Hugh Richards, co-ordinator of Wales Anti-Nuclear Alliance, gave me details of how he and others put serious, well-informed questions to the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate (NII) who ultimately refused to allow the station to re-open after one of its routine closures.

John Large, consultant engineer and well known authority on nuclear power, gave me extensive detail of how a fuel-fire, a Chernobyl-type incident, could develop at Hinkley A through failed, tired steelwork in old machinery operated now at far higher temperatures than the designs allowed for.

Greenpeace also informed me that they are considering a Magnox campaign nationally next year and would be delighted to help us. They had also come across documents showing BNFL plans to continue the life of the Magnoxes up to 50 years with a new fuel which would also ensure they could reduce their massive plutonium stockpile while guaranteeing a future for the THORP reprocessing plant. At the Stop Hinkley meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> November it was agreed to launch a campaign on this issue and I agreed to organise a public meeting in January. I said I felt an ongoing campaign could require the sustained resources of Stop Hinkley if it is to be effective.

Three speakers have agreed to speak at a public meeting on January 25<sup>th</sup> at Bridgwater Arts Centre (see enclosed information) and John Large has agreed to speak in March.

John has much to say on the subject of Magnoxes in general and Hinkley 'A' in particular and could give a talk of one-to-one and a half hours in duration and so we agreed to make that a separate public meeting. His input was greatly valued at the Hinkley 'C' Inquiry where he was a very strong advocate of our case.

I hope to run a series of public meetings drawing more and more attention to our aim to have Hinkley 'A' closed now, having already passed its design life. These meetings will be supported by press-releases, general liaison with the media, possibly demonstrations and petitions and certainly detailed forceful letter-writing to the NII and other relevant bodies. In fact I am awaiting replies to letters to the NII and Somerset County Council. The first on the question of 'embrittlement' at Hinkley 'A' caused by long term use and operation at higher than design temperatures to "anneal" cracks in the Reactor Pressure Vessels. This was a key question in the eventual closure of the twin station at Trawsfynydd. The second question to the Chief Scientific Officer at Somerset County Council deals with the question of emergency plans in the event of a fission fire. At Trawsfynydd the planned response was to cover the reactor with a canvass tarpaulin! Very helpful that would be in the event of a Chernobyl - type explosion!

On the issue of liaison with other environmental groups, I attended the Taunton Friends of the Earth meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> November. I handed out circulars to the 62 strong gathering advertising

our public meeting. I also addressed the audience and Charles Secrett, Director of Friends of the Earth and main speaker, with a short statement that Stop Hinkley is alive and well, and will be launching a Stop Hinkley 'A' campaign which we invite people to join. Charles expressed FOE's continuing prioritisation of the anti-nuclear question and said he would be happy to work with our group again on the issue.

### Faulty Welds at Hinkley 'A'

Both reactors at Hinkley 'A' have been closed since April due to the discovery of 'bodged' welds in the boiler system (heat exchanger) on Reactor 2. Recently this reactor came back on stream again after months of work but Reactor 1 is still out of action, due to restart before Christmas, subject to NII approval. My letter to the NII mentioned this alarming state of the basic engineering at the plant, well known to campaigners and the man-in-the-street in Somerset but apparently a complete surprise to the operators, BNFL!

### Faulty Filters at Hinkley 'A'

The Environment Agency are currently considering legal action against BNFL following another surprise discovery: this time of holes in a filter used for preventing radioactive caesium being discharged into the Bristol Channel. When I spoke to the Nuclear Inspector he expressed alarm that there may not have been adequate routine measures to prevent this kind of nuclear pollution and it would be on this question that they may prosecute BNFL, as opposed to any actual harmful discharges. Caesium was released in quantities at Chernobyl and is well known to accumulate in the human reproductive system.

Through the two-monthly newsletter I will keep you informed of campaign work and developments together with associated news in the wider nuclear and anti-nuclear field.

I look forward to your support in this vital project.

Yours  
Jim Duffy

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**SHUT HINKLEY 'A' !**

The ageing **Magnox** reactors at Hinkley 'A' are now the most vulnerable in Britain to a **Chernobyl** type explosion.

Cracks in the **Pressure Vessels** which have been run at hotter temperatures than they were designed for could lead to devastating fuel fires with deadly fallout blown hundreds of miles!

Trawsfynydd power station in Wales **built in the same year** as Hinkley 'A' was closed 8 years ago because of these concerns!

BNFL want to **extend the life** of Hinkley A and other Magnoxes to an outrageous 50 years with a new fuel called Magrox!

**Stop Hinkley** is planning a **SHUT HINKLEY 'A'** campaign

We will hold a public meeting on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> January 7.30pm, The Arts Centre, Castle Street, Bridgwater with expert speakers:

**Hugh Richards, Director of Wales Anti-Nuclear Alliance and Trawsfynydd campaign leader.**

**Helen Wallace, Greenpeace, scientist, activist and researcher**

**Richard Bramhall, Editor of Radioactive Times, Trawsfynydd campaigner and Low Level Radiation Expert**

Put this date in your diary and join us in this vital campaign.

Jim Duffy

Stop Hinkley Co-ordinator (subject to AGM approval)

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Pass this leaflet on ...

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Please put me on the Shut Hinkley 'A' campaign mailing list (applies to non-members).

NAME .....

ADDRESS

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