



Newsletter

November 2000

# Oldbury campaign heats up, Case for n-plant leukaemia link Oldbury Regulators Fiasco

The Oldbury Site Inspector for the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate has been overwhelmed by the amount of letters he has received since our campaign began! Speaking at the station's Local Community Liaison Council meeting recently he said he had taken five working days to formulate answers to concerns about MagRox fuel and general plant safety in the 32 year old reactors.

He complained however that this deluge of letters was preventing him doing his job of inspecting the site. The Thornbury Gazette' turned this comment into a headline, 'Nuclear protesters hit station's safety'.

The same edition included comments from the Environment Agency site inspector who said that the cancer study we commissioned this year had an effect on public moral near Hinkley and hoped the same would not happen at Oldbury. Then in a fit of mistaken paranoia he accused the 'driving force' behind the Hinkley and Oldbury campaigns of urging people to chain themselves to the gates of the nuclear submarine dockyard in Plymouth!

The paper quoted the Oldbury station manager as saying there was an orchestrated campaign of misinformation about his plant although he gave qualified praise to Hugh Richards' technical presentation at our Bristol public meeting which his Chief Engineer discretely attended.

## Angry replies

Three letters were printed on the editor's page the next week including one from *Stop Hinkley*. All complained about the one-sidedness of the industry regulators with one letter

saying the "council was a mouthpiece for BNFL" and accusing the nuclear chiefs of creating the "orchestrated campaign of misinformation". Picking up that the station manager "welcomed the challenge of addressing people's concerns" Tony Harding wrote that "the NII inspector says people like me are wasting his time by doing precisely that! Which is it to be?"

## Complaints

In addition to our letter to the editor which took headline place with the caption "Oldbury concerns not mere nuisance", we sent complaints to the respective regulating bodies which are currently being addressed by heads of department. We do not want to fall out with the regulators who ultimately have the power to close the plant down, but feel we must pick up on publicised comments which degrade and stereotype our legitimate concerns.

## Bristol public meeting

Hugh Richards headed the line up of speakers giving his usual professional presentation supported with industry sourced information. He ran through the technical flaws at Oldbury and worries about MagRox fuel as outlined in our last newsletter. Then a palpable



shudder passed through the audience as he showed that the radioactive waste from the *unfiltered* incinerator at Oldbury is blown towards Bristol one day in five! As the particles are relatively heavy they would mostly fall to the ground or be inhaled within 25 miles of Oldbury which is only five miles from Bristol suburbs.

**Patrick Van Den Bulck** from National CND commended our campaign work noting that our press cuttings pinned over their London office were evidence of an unmatched media response to our concerns about local power stations. He pointed out that all the Magnox plants around the country except Oldbury and Wylva in Wales now had planned closure dates and that we were successfully raising the pressure to get a date for Oldbury. He predicted that imminent forecast dates for Bradwell and Dungeness power stations will be brought forward due to massive problems at those plants. This will lead to even more discomfort for BNFL, who lost £150 million this year due to the closure of Hinkley 'A', and increase their dependence on Oldbury for profits.

**Paul Dorfman**, Nuclear Researcher and co-author of Dr Chris Busby's Hinkley Cancer Study gave a presentation on the research findings which showed that (with a similar topography to Oldbury) those living near the plant were up to twice as likely to die of cancer. The topographical conditions seemed important with radioactive waste particles blown inland from exposed mudbanks near the reactors, possibly reinforced by incinerated radioactive waste blown on the wind and inhaled by local people over a long period.

## Campaign meeting

A dozen enthusiastic Bristolians turned up to discuss future tactics. Suggestions included setting up a website which Paul Dorfman agreed to coordinate; sending off e-mails to local friends and colleagues with info on Oldbury; arranging a street theatre event on Broadmead - a meeting was fixed to rehearse this with Chris Brian of Bristol Friends of the Earth co-ordinating; continuing our public meetings which *Stop Hinkley* has been organising. The group agreed to meet again on January 18<sup>th</sup>, see *Events*.

## Leukaemia study public meeting

**Dr Carol Barton a Consultant Haematologist gave a moving account in Burnham-on-Sea of her thirty year work with childhood victims of leukaemia living near nuclear plants in Berkshire.**

Having moved from a similar job in London she was puzzled at the relatively very high number of cases she was dealing with. Mothers in a support group she set up revealed that half of their husbands worked at the Aldermaston and Burghfield nuclear weapons plants nearby which sent alarm bells ringing for her! Interestingly from the point of view of health risk assessment the nuclear workers had received radiation doses of less than five millisieverts, considered low by industry scientists. The study which spanned her thirty years at the Royal Berkshire Hospital was reviewed by COMARE, the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment. She was especially careful to take cases out of

the study if there was the slightest doubt about their inclusion.

## Findings

The study showed that children within ten kilometres of the plants were twice as likely to contract the disease (the same distance as Burnham from Hinkley) and those living in the whole of West Berkshire were 30 per cent more likely to get leukaemia.

Reinforcing the view of Dr Chris Busby on the possible uptake of radionuclides from drying contaminated mudbanks, she spoke about research on the town of Chernobinsk in Russia near where a nuclear plant of the same name had been built. The lake bordering the plant and the town had been used for dumping liquid radioactive waste. Large expanses of mudflats became exposed each summer as the lake partially dried out and research found high numbers of leukaemia and cancer sufferers in the adjoining town. Dr Barton pointed out that the plant was some 20 kilometres from the town so it was largely the contaminated mudbanks that were blamed as transporting the radiation.

**Paul Dorfman** spoke at the same meeting which Richard and Liz Capewell could not address as advertised, due to 'flu. He went over Somerset Health Authority studies into leukaemia published by Dr Cameron Bowie in the 1980's. These showed up to 61 per cent more leukaemia in under 25 year olds in the Musgrove Park Hospital catchment area which incidentally did not cover Burnham. There was a particularly high incidence of the disease in the first years after the plant was built. Dr Bowie said in his report that these figures could not be

fully explained according to government risk assessments unless there had been a large unpublicised release of radiation. What many campaigners now say is that these risk assessments are massively inaccurate in favour of the nuclear industry. Dr Busby has recently published a paper criticising government scientists as understating health risk by a factor of one hundred. He has agreed to outline this research in January at a local public meeting where he will also give an update on the Hinkley Cancer Study with fresh figures for 1999.

## Other Campaigns

### Nuclear Trains

**Chris Brian** from Bristol Friends of the Earth is coordinating a demo on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> November at Bristol Temple Meads Station to highlight concerns about the nuclear fuel trundling up and down the line from Bridgwater through Bristol and on to Sellafield. Tel. 0117 942 0129.

Britain's top independent nuclear engineer **John Large** has recently pronounced on the dangers to people living in London from the nuclear flasks. In Taunton last March he described how dangerous the flasks are if they accidentally fall *upside down* as the coolant fluid could escape under pressure resulting in the fuel rods overheating and consequent catastrophe. He pointed out that the railway wagons carrying the flasks not only collect radioactive particles falling off the flasks but now after years of contamination harbour *fixed radiation* adding to doses received by those nearby.

BNFL recently went on a charm offensive to the infants school next to Eastover Sidings in Bridgwater where the flasks are craned on and off the wagons. The 400 pupil school was featured in the HTV documentary this year highlighting our Shut Hinkley campaign. The then headteacher complained about the proximity of the flasks to his schoolchildren and the absence of any feedback from measurements of the monitoring post in his schoolyard.

Hinkley 'A' Station Manar was photographed in local newspapers donating books to the new headteacher. The Nuclear Trains Campaign is coordinated nationally by Patrick Van Den Bulck of CND. Tel. 0207 607 2802.

### **Weston worries**

Plans to build a new infant school next to the railway line at Worle are the subject of a new campaign. Concerned resident John Stadden is trying to get the plans stopped.

**Sandyachters** at Weston are planning to pay for monitoring of the dust that blows in their faces as they hurtle along the beach ten miles downstream from Hinkley.

### **Parents Concerned About Hinkley**

based in Burnham but accepting members from anywhere near Hinkley are meeting with BNFL and Health Authority bosses to talk about their concerns. One Burnham vet apparently recommended owners not to walk their dogs on the beach due to high cancer rates he found in pets with this routine. Tel. Sue Hall on 01278 785419.

### **N-Sub waste in Plymouth**

A new campaigning group is taking on the MoD in a bid to stop spent nuclear reactors being dumped near the city along the River Tamar. Tel. Ian on 01752 511274.

### **Dialogues**

We are told we will be invited to the national dialogue with BNFL on Decommissioning Policy. We have also been invited to the steering group of a Soil Contamination team which will inform the industry on cleaning up nuclear and chemical soil pollution.

### **Events**

#### **Oldbury public meeting in Bath**

**with Green MEP Caroline Lucas, Hugh Richards and Helen Wallace from Greenpeace**

**Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> November  
7.45pm St Mark's Community Centre, St Mark's Rd, Bath  
(behind the train station)**

Stop Hinkley Committee Meeting. Members welcome. Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> January, 8 pm. Friends Meeting House, Bath Place, Taunton.

Shut Oldbury Campaign meeting. All welcome. Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> January 7.30 pm. Friends Meeting House, 126 Hampton Rd, Redland, Bristol.

### **Contacts**

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