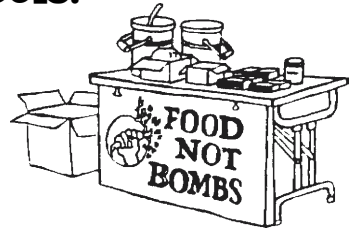




WAKE UP! WAKE UP! IT'S YER BRITISH NUCLEAR FOOLS!

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☢ SHIP OF FOOLS ☢

"We are in danger of sparking a whole new arms race around the Pacific rim." Greenpeace International.

Cumbria... rural England, home to the Lakes, Fells... oh, and British Nuclear Fuels Limited (BNFL). Sellafield, the sprawling nuclear metropolis, with its sordid history of radioactive pollution, on-site fires, and other such niceties, has this week begun a major operation to ship reprocessed nuclear fuel across International waters to Japan.

The nuclear cargo is MOx fuel, mixed oxide rods containing both uranium and plutonium. The rods are heated within the reactor, which produces an ashy film on the outside. This ash is weapons-grade Plutonium. You wouldn't have to be a nuclear physicist to remove it. Pacific Nuclear Transport (PNT) is the company that owns both Pacific Pintail and Pacific Teal, the ships which will be carrying the nuclear cargo. Japan cannot reprocess fuel itself, and therefore, needs European plants to do the dirty work for them, namely Sellafield in Britain and La Hague in France. PNT is owned by BNFL, which is in turn owned by the Government...how cosy?

The undisclosed route is expected to take two months, even though most countries don't want the ships to pass through their waters. Fourteen Caribbean heads of government are furious that they were not consulted about the route. The fisher folk in South Korea have vowed to blockade the ships en-mass with their boats, fearing the cargo will threaten their safety and livelihoods.

There will be over 400kg of plutonium on board the ships, enough to manufacture 60 nuclear bombs. This is quite worrying for the international community, as Japan has had tight reins on its arsenal of weapons since WW2. As Kevin Dunion, Friends of the Earth, points out, *"As its neighbours watch, Japan is slowly increasing its stockpile of weapons-useable nuclear materials with the blessing of British Nuclear Fuels and our Government."*

In a vain PR attempt, BNFL would like to sever the link between the nuclear industry and the military in the minds of both the public and foreign Governments. Activists clambered onto a crane in the civilian dock at Cherbourg, where the Pacific Teal was to collect it's deadly cargo from the COGEMA plant at Cape de La Hague, Northern France. The goal of the action was to push the ship into the military dock next door, to highlight the link.

This is the first time a shipment of this kind will NOT receive a Naval escort. Instead

The Pintail and The Teal have both undergone a multi-million pound refit to arm them against military and terrorist threat (oh, and it seems good old-fashioned piracy hasn't been ruled out, either!) Greenpeace state that *"If a government or paramilitary force seizes the cargo it could have a nuclear weapon within three weeks."*

The 30mm canons and other defence weapons on board have made the Pintail and Teal the first armed merchant ships in 50 years. Despite BNFL's claims that the ships are not at risk, the civilian crews sailing them will receive danger money!! The National Union of Marine Aviation and Shipping Officers (NUMAST) asked for a pay increase for the staff and war-zone payments if the ship sailed into difficulties!!

The Government have decided to sell off 49% of British Nuclear Fuels to the private sector, making themselves a nice little earner to the tune of £1.5 BILLION! But there's a catch. This will only happen if Sellafield can generate lucrative profits from the successful production and shipping of the controversial MOx fuel. If this week's shipment goes smoothly, there will be another 80 to follow over the next decade.

The last thing BNFL need is bad publicity as it hardly encourages the investors they so desperately need. Greenpeace, old acquaintances of the nuclear industry, set out to pull the rug from under BNFL's feet. Dragging an inflatable white elephant in front of the Pacific Teal to expose the face of this whole venture, the shipment was delayed for 12 hrs. Not taking too kindly to this 'scary' ordeal, BNFL immediately hauled Greenpeace into court, where they accused the organization of breaching a High Court injunction obtained 3 days before the consignment even left Sellafield. In an obvious attempt to prevent any embarrassing protests, the company tried to ensure Greenpeace kept their distance.

"As a company, BNFL has no problem with a peaceful and lawful protest. However we would not want to see the safety of the ships' crew, the escort team or the public at large

"A report written in 1994 states that a coolant failure at Sellafield, lasting for as little as half a day could result in an explosion that would force the evacuation of two million people from Britain and cripple the Irish economy for several decades."

The Ecologist

For excellent, up to the minute account of the ships, check-out www.greenpeace.org Or call... Cumbrians Opposed to a Radioactive Environment (CORE) ..01229 833 851

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For secretly tape recording the police! Michael Hyde was found guilty of violating Massachusetts state wiretap laws, which forbid recording the voice a person without their knowledge. Mr Hyde recorded the police swearing and threatening him with jail. When he brought the tape to the Abington police, he was charged and in court sentenced to six months probation and a \$500 fine.

put in danger by some irresponsible media stunt," Alastair Thomas, BNFL's head of transport, said in a statement. So plutonium doesn't put anyone's safety in danger, does it Alastair?!!

The outcome in court was that Greenpeace International has had its bank accounts frozen at BNFL's request. The company is claiming £90,275 damages for extra wages they claim they had to pay because of the delay. Also, John Prescott, the deputy prime minister ordered Greenpeace to remove its ships from British waters. This is the first time such an order has been made under the 1995 merchant shipping act. *"Greenpeace will not be strangled in its peaceful efforts to expose the dangerous and dirty nature of the plutonium industry by this financial terrorism. It is an obscene miscarriage of justice that Greenpeace is under attack rather than the French, British and Japanese Gov's, who are conducting a trade in weapons-useable plutonium."*

The Governments' little baby, BNFL are themselves in a state of disarray, breaking their own environmental guidelines and promises. They were in such a rush to escape from Barrow, they even forgot to weld down the hatches

"If this cargo is allowed to leave, the governments ethical foreign policy will be in tatters. It is not ethical to annually pump millions of litres of radioactive waste into the sea. It is not ethical to impose this dangerous transport on the en route states, threatening the lives and livelihoods of millions of people. It is not ethical to be a world leader in the sale of weapons-useable radioactive material." Jenny MacKay, Greenpeace.

* A captain in the Russian navy walked free this week after spending 14 months inside for handing footage of sailors dumping radioactive waste into the sea, to a Japanese TV network.. Espionage charges against him were dropped, and he was freed under an amnesty. The Russian authorities tried to hush it all up, but the failed, and he became a local hero, gaining support from monks and women who gave him pizza.

Multi-coloured Swap Shop

Protestors attending a 'Stop the Crop' rally in Oxfordshire last Sunday, did just that. About 400 hundred people donned bio-hazard suits and decontaminated (read trashed) one of the UK's largest genetic farm scale trials. The 25 hectares of genetically modified oilseed rape was one of six major GM crop trials currently taking place in the UK. The rape at Model Farm has been modified to tolerate the AgrEvo corporation's 'Liberty' herbicide, killing all other nearby wildplants dead. Pollen from oil seed rape is also known to travel 2.5 km on the wind, and bees and other insects aren't too clued up on telling the difference, leading it's feared to so called 'superweeds'.

Gene pollution is not the only problem. A recent experiment in the US, revealed that the Monarch butterfly was poisoned by contact with pollen from crops which are modified to contain herbicide. Six people were arrested and the police droned on as per usual about "a peaceful and enjoyable day for many people has been spoilt by the criminal actions of a few." The cops are also threatening to study footage taken by the police helicopter - but with everybody looking the bloody same, SchNEWS wonders have the dirty perverts got x-ray cameras.

* Despite claims by the bio-tech industry that genetic engineering would reduce the use of pesticides, statistics from the US Department of Agriculture from 1997 show that expanded plantings of Roundup Ready soybeans (i.e. soybeans genetically engineered to be tolerant to the herbicide) resulted in a 72% increase in the use of glyphosate.

* Genetic Engineering Network, genetics@gn.apc.org Tel 0181 374 9516

* Campaigners from GenetiX Snowball are at the Royal Courts of Justice, The Strand, London next Wednesday (28th) and need your support. Court starts at 9.30 am Tel 0161 834 0295

SISTERS OF MERCY PART 2

Black-clad Polish nurses have added their voices to the rising swell of anti-government feeling by blockading central Warsaw for the second time in two weeks. 30,000 nurses and midwives began a hunger strike demanding an increase in their monthly wage of £65 and more stable employment terms. Another 100,000 workers were expected to join them unless the health service receives more money. Warsaw officials insisted that funding should be agreed regionally with health managers, most of whom deny having spare cash. The managers have controlled nurses' salaries since a January reform introduced tough market-led reforms in health, education, admin and social security replacing former communist systems. These moves, reminiscent of the 'free' market truncheon-wielding reforms in eighties Britain, give high earnings for managers while impoverishing ordinary state employees. Doctors, anaesthetists, miners, steelworkers, dockers, farmers and railway staff have staged parallel protests in recent months. Poland's Solidarity-led government, intent on getting its economy in line for early EU membership or bust, has a hard-line response to the protests. Union leaders have warned the government of widespread unrest if they refuse to permit "social dialogue" about its reforms. It seems that the rosy glow of Soviet overthrow has well and truly disappeared, leaving the Poles wondering whatever happened to democracy. Surely loss of freedom to protest and degradation of quality of life should not be the price of joining the West - where, supposedly, we have freedom of speech, and all earn loadsa money to spend in McDonalds?

* Meanwhile over in Quebec, nurses have called off their five week strike while members vote on a deal that will give them a 6% pay-rise and better job security (see Schnews219).

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SCHNEWS IN BRIEF

Direct Action Works! After 18 days of picketing, 300 striking Malaysian workers have won the right to sit down at work. Previously workers at Sanyo Electric in Kuala Lumpur were forced to work in a standing position for 8 hours and 45 minutes every day. www.struggs@mindspring.com ** We got an e-mail this week from someone who was caught reading the Schnews at work by his boss, and got the sack! ** The word 'greenwash' has entered the Oxford Dictionary. It's explained as "Disinformation disseminated by an organisation so as to present an environmentally responsible public image". That's bullshitting to you and me! ** Guildford squatters have been evicted from a squat - so the house can be turned into hostel for the homeless! The eviction took place after squatters offered to pay rent and bills ** Ecuadorian taxi drivers have won a 12 day strike over fuel prices when the president gave in to their demands, and froze the price of gas, as he feared there would be a coup d'etat. During the strike, the transport system was gridlocked, and a state of emergency was declared with troops and tanks patrolling the streets of the capital. Ecuador is in the throes of its worst economic crisis saddled with a \$16.4 billion foreign debt, made worse by El Nino flood damage and sinking international prices for its key oil and banana exports. Two-thirds of Ecuador's people live below the poverty line ** The Tory block of MEPs in the European parliament looks set to choose Caroline Jackson to head the committee on the environment, despite the fact that she's been on the board of Peugeot UK for 12 years. No conflict of interest there then. ** Don't forget the Gladstonebury mini-festival at the Gladstone Pub, Brighton on Sat July 31. Bands, DJs, performers, poets, barbecue + more. £2 all day, in aid of Brighton Lifeline for Kosova. Contact: 01273 234 788.

DEATH IN CHILKA

4 protesters have been killed and thirteen injured at Chilka Lake in India after local villagers destroyed 11 illegal prawn farms. The lake, declared a wetland of international importance is home to dolphins and migratory birds. Despite a Supreme Court judgement saying there should be no shrimp farms within 1000 metres of the lake, large scale industrial shrimp farming gave way to smaller, less scrupulous operators with the support of corrupt local politicians and bureaucrats. After a 24 hour ultimatum was ignored, local villagers moved in. The police subsequently raided the villages, throwing tear gas and beating and shooting. In response there was a mass strike action with fishworkers blocking rail and road links, while in the regional capital Bhubaneswar shops were closed and vehicles stopped as people made a human wall in the city resulting in two thousand arrests!

YOUR LAND IS THEIRS

The Land Is Ours are trying to use the little known 1965 Commons Registration Act, to get land they are currently occupying turned into a village green. The former hospital site has been squatted by the group to commemorate the Kett rebellion of 1549, a time of uprisings by the rural dispossessed over the enclosure of common land. Kett became leader of a 20,000 Norfolk bannymen, which reclaimed the commons for two months and locked up the worst landowners until they were eventually defeated. Land Is Ours, Box E, 111 Magdalen Rd., Oxford, OX4 1RQ Tel 01865 722016 Site mobile 0961 460171 www.oneworld.org/tlio/

** The villagers of Sunningwell, Oxfordshire are celebrating winning a landmark victory against a housing development. Thanks to a Law Lords ruling, the 10 acre piece of land known as the 'glebe', used as a recreation area for over twenty years, can now be classed as a village green.

INSIDE SCHNEWS

"I am convinced the most important drug case in U.S history will take place in Canada on November 1st" Maury Mason

media & PR Greenpeace Canada

Renee Boje is in Canada awaiting extradition to the U.S. This is the story she told SchNews. "I was working for Todd McCormick, a medical marijuana advocate, under Proposition 215 which states that patients with a prescription or a doctors recommendation, may cultivate or use marijuana medicinally. Todd was researching how different strains help different illnesses. On July 29, 1997 the Federal Drug Enforcement Agency descended on our group with the aggressiveness of a military attack. The charges against me are conspiracy to cultivate, possession of and intent to distribute marijuana, each count punishable by a mandatory minimum of 10 years to life. I deny these charges in the strongest terms. Three months later, the charges were dropped. While I was visiting Canada and without my knowledge, the charges were reinstated. I was arrested and steps toward my extradition to the US were initiated. In L.A, after my arrest, I was strip searched 15 times in 72 hours, sometimes in front of male guards who made threatening and degrading remarks. So, I am seeking protection through Canada's Refugee Board."

Renee needs your support to get her refugee status in Canada. Cash is essential to fund this important legal battle. For every donation of \$25 or more that Renee receives she will send you a cannabis certificate, guaranteed and redeemable against a quarter ounce of organic cannabis flowers as soon as the drug is legalised in Canada.

Renee Boje, P.O. Box 1557 Gibsons, British Columbia, Canada, VON 1V0 www.thecompassionclub.org/renee

* It may have passed you by, but in 1993 the (non-psychoactive) cultivation of cannabis was legalised. Eventually hemp could well replace cotton, coal and cattle in terms of providing our fibre, fuel and protein needs. It is not only eco-friendly, requiring neither pesticides or fertilisers, but is also three times as strong as cotton, burns hotter than coal if compressed and is arguably the most nutritious foodstuff in the plant kingdom.

www.thehempcorp.demon.co.uk

...and finally...

Computers 2, People 0

In what seems like a sinister robot plot to throw humans into chaos, faulty computer systems in drinks machines are inundating Australian emergency services with bogus distress calls. Thousands of Sydney vending machines, programmed to call distributors when they run out of sodas, are calling the emergency services 000 number instead! Hundreds of the calls were made to fire, police and ambulance services by the glorified refrigerators, blocking real emergency calls. Perhaps the poor things are lonely, missing their human stock-checkers. A spokeswoman for the 000 service said the problem is getting worse and spreading to other electronic devices! Meanwhile, Toronto had a scary foretaste of millenium plague last week when a small circuit box fire managed to wipe out 170,000 phone lines, most cell phones and cash points. Systems also crashed at the stock exchange, doctors' pagers and much internet and e-mail. Financial traders could only operate by (horror!) talking to each other face-to-face in the street. Building security systems collapsed, including banks, though this was not made public until later to avoid spontaneous outbursts of wealth redistribution.

disclaimer....SchNews warns all readers that plutonium blondes really do have more fun especially if they're bombshells! Honest.