

Did radiation cause illness?

I HAVE been following with great interest your recent articles about Mr John Connor. After your last one on 19th January I got in touch with him and he supplied me with a copy of his report.

I have read what he has got to say and am in full agreement with his comments regarding working conditions and nuclear safety standards.

I myself was in the Royal Navy and received large doses of radiation while working in the section M11 and E11. I have consequently suffered several times with basal cell carcinomas culminating in major surgery in the last six weeks to remove the last one.

Doctors at Dunfermline's Queen Margaret Hospital and St Johns Hospital in Livingston and the Western in Edinburgh are all mystified as to the cause, as this type of cancer is caused by long-term exposure to tropical-type sunlight.

In my 14 years' service I did not serve in the Tropics, Middle or Far East and, as nuclear reactors emit the same type of radiation as the sun, you can draw your own conclusions from this.

Tom Atherton,
34 Queen Margaret Fauld,
Dunfermline

Nuclear safety concern

A WEST FIFE man has persuaded politicians to push for the parliaments in Edinburgh and London to look into his claims of failures in nuclear safety.

John Connor, David Henderson Court, believes workers at the Faslane Naval Base - many of whom travel through from Rosyth - are being put at risk due to inadequate safety procedures.

Mr Connor, a former radiation controller at the Faslane base, has been voicing his safety fears for six years and, two years ago, brought out his own report detailing the steps required to protect workers.

One of his recommendations for improvements in monitoring has since been brought in at the base - but Mr Connor insists a lot still requires to be done.

He said, "They've introduced new probes which are more efficient at picking up contamination on workers' clothing but they also need to

Extra reporter

introduce what is known as secondary monitoring - which is already in place at Rosyth - to further improve procedures.

"Until that is done there will still be people coming out of Faslane and returning to their families in Rosyth with possible contamination on their clothing."

Concerns raised by Mr Connor in his 21-page report include a series of inadequate safety procedures, lack of supervision of work on nuclear submarines, too few contamination surveys being carried out and the limit on the radiation dose for personnel being set too high.

All this could have serious implications for the health of workers, said Mr Connor, and that's why he has been attempting to persuade politicians to back his calls for improvements.

After many knock-backs, he has now managed to enlist the help of Scottish Socialist Party leader Tommy Sheridan and Scottish Nationalist

Fife MSP Bruce Crawford.

Mr Sheridan has circulated Mr Connor's report to members of a cross-party group on nuclear disarmament and said he would be pressing for the issues raised to be discussed in the Scottish Parliament.

Mr Crawford, meanwhile, has given an assurance that he will try to have the issues raised in the House of Commons.

Douglas Chapman, Mr Crawford's researcher, said, "Bruce has spoken to Mr Connor and has agreed that, following the General Election, he will ask the Scottish Nationalist MPs to raise the matter at Westminster."

Mr Connor said he was pleased that there were now some politicians prepared to take him seriously.

"I'm cautiously optimistic that something might now happen to improve conditions for workers," he said.

"However, I'm not jumping for joy. I won't do that until all my recommendations are in force."

Concerns treated too lightly

IT seems to me that Fife Councillors and the Scottish Parliament are treating too lightly Mr J Connor's concerns about safety procedures around radioactive materials (*Press*, 19th January), as I've stated in this paper before.

I worked at Harwell Atomic Research establishment near Didcot, Oxfordshire, and because of complacency by some of the workforce, contamination was found on buses and in people's homes.

It wouldn't cost that much to set up a monitoring system to monitor homes and transport.

What has Faslane to hide, or the dockyards for that matter? Let's not forget the MoD told the troops used in the atomic bomb experiments on Christmas Island that they had "nothing to worry about," and nor should we forget the radioactive material dumped in the Forth, which the MoD denied. They were proved to be lying.

When the MoD tell you there's nothing to worry about, it's time to start worrying. I'm sure the employees wouldn't mind their homes being monitored for the sake of their families and for their peace of mind.

Don't let this matter go - the guy could be right!

C Sullivan,
101 Jennie Rennie's Road,
Dunfermline

Dunfermline Press, 20th July, 2001

Genuine fears

I RECENTLY had the opportunity to read Mr Connor's report on nuclear safety at Faslane. Mr Connor sent a copy of this to most councillors in the West Fife area, as it was his hope that the west area regulation committee might address this item. However, the committee (and I believe correctly) took the view that this matter was for the consideration of another body.

The problem lies in that Mr Connor has been to all the relevant bodies, West Dunbartonshire Council, local Members of Parliament and to the Health and Safety Executive.

He believes that none of them has properly addressed his complaints, and that some have even ignored his genuine fears. Having read his report I have come to a similar conclusion.

His report also highlights lack of information from the MoD. Mr Connor is not undermining the defence of the country and so his questions should be answered.

Therefore, it is understandable that Mr Connor went to the only other body he felt he could go to - his own local council. Alas, in a democratic society his concerns over workforce safety should have been addressed long ago.

Councillor James P Simpson,
Crossford and Dunfermline Central

Dunfermline Press, 13th July, 2001

Undemocratic

DEMOCRACY, what democracy?

I first wanted my Faslane nuclear report - discussed at Fife Council's West area regulation committee. This was refused on the advice of the clerk to the committee.

I then wanted the Standing Conference of Local Authorities in the Forth Estuary (SCLAFE) to discuss the very serious recommendations in my report, but this was refused by the chairman of SCLAFE, Councillor Keddie, who did not feel it was appropriate to circulate a copy of my report to its members, or for me to speak or attend its meeting!

The fact that the SCLAFE committee felt a public enquiry was necessary for the proposal to dismantle the nuclear sub HMS Renown, and that in my opinion there was an interface between that and my report, makes his decision very undemocratic.

John Connor,
10 David Henderson Court,
Dunfermline

Dunfermline Press, 27th July, 2001

Short-lived joy

MY heart pounded with joy when I read your report regarding Rachel Squire MSP being recommended for Westminster's powerful Defence Select Committee, and that she will be better able effectively to represent her constituents' interests.

But alas, my joy was short-lived as I recalled that, on 12th February 1999, as chairperson of the Labour backbencher defence committee, she informed me that the committee could not discuss my Faslane nuclear report as it had no statutory powers and could only raise matters of concern!

You can draw your own conclusion as to why she has been recommended for the Defence Select Committee!

John Connor,
10 David Henderson Court,
Dunfermline

Dunfermline Press, 3rd August, 2001

FRIENDS of the Earth praised RWMAC for "lifting the lid on unacceptable bad practice by the MoD".

Chief executive Kevin Dunion said the group had exposed the MoD's "laissez-faire" way of dealing with radioactive waste.

"What is of concern is not only the environment being put at risk but the workers too, who were not aware of the full content of the waste," he said. "It's beyond belief that this radioactive waste was completely overlooked."

P.T.O.