

The past few months have seen a great increase in interest in Disarm the Seas issues and environmental concerns from the Scottish media. Attention has focused on nuclear submarine reactor accidents and the emergency plans to deal with them, and also the contamination from Chernobyl which has still left "hot-spots" of radioactivity in Loch Rannoch and Kinross in Perthshire, where pollution is up to 40 times official estimates. Concern has been expressed in Parliament that the public may have unknowingly eaten meat from contaminated sheep and deer from the affected areas, although the government hotly denies any danger.

Existing concern about pollution near the submarine bases on the Clyde was heightened by the publication of results of a survey by the Greenpeace vessel "Moby Dick" at Faslane and the Holy Loch last summer.

A report compiled by independent scientist Dr Paul Johnson of Queen Mary College, London revealed that Caesium 137 at Faslane were four to five times the figures published by the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food, and that Cobalt 60 and Caesium 137 levels at the US Navy base at the Holy Loch were up to nine times higher than official figures. Although higher than official estimates, these figures still fall within the "acceptable" limits set by the authorities. These limits have had to be constantly lowered in the light of new research, and are not a measure of absolute safety.

The pollution at the bases is believed to arise mainly from discharges from nuclear-powered subs, which can discharge reactor coolant water into the sea when the reactors are being started up after a period in dock. Faslane also discharges effluent from a primary coolant filter bed into the Gareloch on a regular basis, although the Mod deny this.

Greenpeace have called on the US and UK Navies to release the unpublished results of monitoring in the area, to fund independent monitoring in future, and to cut all discharges from the bases drastically.

The Greenpeace report built on local concern from a Channel 4 documentary "The Base Line" which cast grave doubts over the emergency plans and routine safety procedures at the Clyde bases.

In the documentary, ex US submarine Commander Captain James Bush expressed profound regret at the way the US had abused the hospitality of the Scottish people during his tour of duty at the US base, by dumping primary coolant from their subs into the Clyde, leading to contamination of mud-flats at the Holy Loch with Cobalt 60. There is growing evidence of a cluster of rare and childhood cancers in the area surrounding the US base.

A Faslane spokesman, while unable to refute the Greenpeace findings, dismissed the story as "alarmist", saying: "Greenpeace have admitted that they have a vested interest in the figures, they have a policy of unilateral disarmament". The Royal Navy, of course, has no vested interest in keeping such findings from the public!

Meanwhile at Faslane, Defence Secretary George Younger paid a visit to Faslane on March 6th. Unlike normal visits, the press were not informed of this, but Jim Chestnut from Faslane broke into the base during the clandestine visit, to let Mr Younger know that his presence was no secret!

In northern Scotland concern is divided between possible plans for a nuclear waste dump at or near Dounreay on the northermost coast, low-flying military jets, and test-drilling in Glen Garry on the West coast for an aerial system to communicate with submarines.

NIREX, the UK agency in charge of nuclear waste dumping is due to announce its proposed site for a nuclear dump any time now. The two main possible choices are Sellafield in northwest England, where there is already a waste dump at Drigg, and either Aldbrough near Dounreay, or Dounreay itself. Both areas depend on the nuclear industry for work, but many of the Dounreay workforce are opposed to nuclear dumping, though job-losses arising from the cancellation of the European Demonstration Reprocessing Plant may change some minds. Siting the dump in northern Scotland would mean the rail transport of waste over long distances, which opposition groups see as a major campaigning issue. Unofficial statements indicate that Sellafield may be the most likely site, but studies prior to test-boring are being carried out in the Dounreay area to test its suitability for a low and medium-level waste dump - either for Dounreay's own waste, or from the whole UK. Once the decision is made, NIREX plan a major advertising campaign



TAHITI: HEALTH SURVEY REJECTED IN EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

In early February, after three years of deliberation, amendments, and manipulations, the European Parliament defeated a resolution calling for an independent health survey to be conducted in Tahiti to measure the effects of French nuclear testing on both the population and the environment. The vote was 136 against, 106 for the survey with 16 abstentions.

The European Environment Commission has said that, regardless of the vote, they view the issue with concern and will initiate talks with the French government. European parliamentary elections are coming up in May. It is hoped that people will question their prospective Euro MPs as to their stance on continued French nuclear testing in the Pacific.

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BELAUAN ANTI-NUCLEAR GROUPS NOMINATED FOR NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

The Minority Rights Group (USA) together with more than 200 other groups and individuals from around the world have nominated two Belauan organisations KITAL-RENG and OTIL A BELAUD for the 1989 Nobel Peace Prize. The groups represent Belauan women and men who are struggling to maintain their country's nuclear-free constitution in the face of U.S. pressure and often violent intimidation.

If you wish to participate in this nomination write directly to:
The Nobel Institute, Drammansvelien 9
0235 Oslo 2, NORWAY

NAN PROTESTS WAR GAMES IN SOUTH KOREA

In February, Charlie Scheiner for NAN wrote to President Bush, the U.S. Department of Defence, and President Roh Tae Moo of South Korea protesting the "ZEAM SPIKIT" war games in South Korea. This year's exercises are the largest peacetime military manoeuvres ever undertaken by the Pentagon and significantly threaten the recently-opened dialogue between North and South Korea.

The exercise, running from February through early May, involves over 200,000 U.S. and South Korean military personnel and covers all forms of combat readiness including training for chemical and nuclear warfare. Letters of protest to the U.S. government are recommended.

URANIUM SHIPMENTS ARRIVING IN EUROPE FROM ROXBAY DOWNS, AUSTRALIA

As we go to press, people are preparing to protest the arrival of the first shipment of uranium (yellowcake) for the British Central Electricity Generating Board due, via Rotterdam, between 18th-20th March. Supporters will 'greet' the ship Commodore II, carrying 18 freight containers of yellowcake, when it arrives first in Rotterdam. It is then expected to dock in Felixstowe where it is hoped there will be a protest as well as at Springfields, the British uranium enrichment plant. Roxby Downs, owned by Rio Tinto Zinc and British Petroleum, violates Kakaha peoples' sacred land and escalates the global dangers of nuclear power and weapons. The Swedish State Power Board also has contracted with RTZ to receive Roxby Downs uranium.

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BELAU CALLS FOR MORATORIUM ON CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENDA

The Belauan election was a seven-way race officially won by a pro-U.S. candidate Ngirakel Epsilon, who defeated his pro-nuclear free constitution rival by 31 votes. Despite demands for a recount and an inquiry, the Election Commission upheld the result. Epsilon's party 'Ta Belau' was formed by furloughed government workers in 1987 to promote the U.S.'s interests in Belau. However, the newly-elected Belauan House and Senate are not heavily in favour of the 'compact of free association' with the U.S. and have issued a statement that no voting on the constitutional issue will take place until 1990.

The U.S. Pacific bases scheme is heavily dependent on the Philippines, South Korea and Japan. As dissent grows in these three countries, more pressure surely be brought to bear upon Belau to renounce its nuclear-free constitution and 'welcome' U.S. military interests.

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