

Aldermaston Update!

Quarterly Newsletter of the Aldermaston Women's Peace Campaign

May – July 2000



Don't be fooled!

Inside this issue

- April Fools action
- Interview with plucky worker
- Special press cuttings pull-out
- Camp news
- EA Judicial Review

Ho, ho ho! Workers and management alike were stunned to find that yet another new company had taken over at AWE Aldermaston on 1 April. In a surprise U-turn during the week before the change-over, and following previous government announcements that the nuclear weapons factory would be managed by AWE Management Ltd (the evil consortium of BNFL, Lockheed Martin and Serco), people were relieved to hear that the contract had actually been awarded to a local firm, the Alice Waste Processing Company.

However, when workers from the new company — perhaps one of the few women-only companies in the nuclear industry — arrived at the gates for their first day at work, they were stunned to find that they were unable to gain admission. Not to be put off, the women donned their headscarves, pinnies and overalls, and said they would make a start by cleaning the exterior areas of the factory. Equipment tables were set up, where

bombs were rapidly decommissioned, and a team of workers, armed with the brooms and anti-radiation sprays, set to work.

However things turned a little chaotic, and over-excitement broke out when a particularly diligent worker attempted to enter her workplace with the aid of a pair of bolt croppers. Under the eyes of the media, workers looked on as the evil security forces of darkness (also known as the MOD Police) used all their brain cells at once to foil the woman's plucky attempt to enter the site. Suddenly, whipping off their headscarves and throwing down their brooms, the awful truth was revealed. Alice Waste Processing Company were none other than the cunningly disguised Aldermaston Women's Peace Campaign (AWPC)!!!!

Reverting to their normal behaviour they spent the rest of the morning blockading the police van in which the plucky worker had been imprisoned, and then

continued from page 1

returned to camp chortling quietly to themselves and had a nice cup of tea! Much fun had by all!

And just in case you didn't know: the government awarded the contract to manage AWE Aldermaston in late 1999 to a consortium of BNFL, Lockheed Martin and Serco, known as AWE Management Ltd. A lead-team had been working on-site since February, prior to their taking over the contract on 1 April.

In March, following "revelations" of BNFL's falsification of records in connection with Mox shipments to Japan, questions were raised about whether BNFL and Lockheed Martin — who are subject to three ongoing legal actions in the US courts should be awarded in contract. Despite the fact that these companies have even more appalling safety records than their predecessors (Hunting BRAE) the government persisted in awarding the contract to AWE Management Ltd. Since the contract was awarded, local concern has increased. Within the week the company announced that they intend to sack 1500 workers - surely not a healthy recipe for safety (or how to win friends in the local community). More recently the consortium has been subject to increasingly bad press following a number of leaks to the press (see our "Leaking like a sieve" special pull out section).



Trash Trident Trial Part II

Finally a date has been agreed for Rosie and Rachel's retrial. It will take place at Manchester Crown Court from 11 September 2000.

Please contact us if you would like to offer support awtt tel (m) 07808 553778 e-mail: awtt@hotmail.com

or see www.gn.apc.org/tp2000



Go on! Send us a donation today.



Interview with plucky worker

Police: What can you tell me about that?

Alice Waste employee: Well I got taken on by this Alice Waste Processing Company and taken up there for my first shift which was to start at eleven, cos we're supposed to clean up the base and stop them making these nuclear weapons, so I turned up. I had my new marigolds and everything. The MOD had played this joke on us, presumably because it was April Fools, and had locked us out you see. After a bit we said well look, enough's enough lads, open up but they wouldn't - so I thought well we've got to start cleaning up inside, so I got my bolt cutters, had a bit of a chop and then somebody came and dragged me off...

Police: OK

Police: You decided you would gain entry to the site, yes?

Alice Waste employee: Yes, yes, because it's got a lot of plutonium on it and it needs to be cleaned up. I didn't think BNFL could manage that.

[Police then turn their minds to the somewhat shadowy existence of Alice Waste]

Police: Alice Waste Processing - where do they run out of?

AW employee: erm - there's a fire just down the road from the main gate - it's a bit informal.

Police: And what's around the fire?

AW employee: pots and pans and food and tents

Police: [the hideous truth dawns] So it's a camp then in effect

AW employee: It is really, isn't it, yes

Police: Who's in charge

AW employee: Nobody

Police: Nobody. So who employed you?

AW employee: Err, just some women.

Police: Just some women.

[Further attempts to get to the bottom of why anyone might not welcome BNFL's involvement with illegal, immoral and polluting weapons of mass destruction.]

Police: Now why would you say BNFL is silly?

AW employee: Because any company that lies to the extent that they have and falsifies documents and then gets found out and just persists in the same way.

[After further discussion of international law, moral decision-making and the half-life of plutonium, the police get tough.]

Police: So there was no cleaning company. There's no employer or cleaning company.

AW employee: Really? Isn't there?

Police: It's just yourself.

AW employee: I haven't got a job? You're saying I haven't got a job? Will I not get paid?

Other bizarre snippets (warning of what strange subjects you get on to when you talk in a police interview):

Police: We'll check to see if someone has complained about the theft of some Pringles when we get back.

AW employee: I used to be in the Girl Guides.

Police: Yes, great, that's wonderful.

AW employee: It is lovely isn't it.

[PS all this really is in my interview. They were worried I might have stolen a) some boltcutters and b) some paprika Pringles from camp. I tried to explain 'sharing' but they didn't get it. My court date is 14th and 15th August, when I will try to bring out the slightly more serious point that no company can have authority to manage a nuclear weapons factory unless its aim is to stop producing.]

Camp news

Car documents

On 1 April three carloads of women attended a fence climbing workshop near Boilerhouse Gate. Thames Valley Police (TVP) also attended, and prevented any practice. They then proceeded with the extremely important law-enforcement activity of asking the three drivers for their documents under legislation intended to regulate vehicles...not protest! This is the only legislation that gives the police a truly "random" power to stop...though it is rarely used in a random fashion, of course. In 30 years of driving I have only ever been stopped three times - each time when I was behind a nuclear weapons convoy (and thereafter a lot further behind!). Abuse of this power needs recording and challenging.

As TVP were so busy with this they forgot to stop me climbing in a second time, perhaps because they were under the mistaken apprehension that I had been arrested - silly billies. A posse of Spanish women moving inwards was foiled at Reading Gate as I was ejected outwards by MDP; then they too had their van inspected by TVP.

TVP also made liberal use of video and still cameras; they must have quite a rogue's gallery by now - perhaps we should start making one of our own, both of TVP and "the Suits" (the more expensive the suit, the greater the criminal).

Roving Report

More people "inside" know me by name than I can recognise - a sign of the normalisation of the reclamation of AWE Aldermaston (& my appalling memory). Last week, after climbing in five times as I walked round (the US flag was flying, signifying another American visit), I was more or less given free run of the "sterile zone" (between the first two fences). As I passed a worker in the North Ponds area we agreed that we each had our jobs; his doing something with water, me reclaiming the land; with three police vehicles and sundry officers overseeing.

Data Protection Act Requests

AWE plc/ml is not very hot on this. They have finally acknowledged they have three electronic entries on me, and they were kind enough to tell me in general terms what they comprised - including my address. However, they failed to provide copies of the documents, so I have no idea of the accuracy (except the letter arrived) of the data they hold...which is the whole idea of the DPA requests! Oh dear. Perhaps we should give them some practice?

Holes are being drilled each side of Decoy Pond...more pollution?.....*the roving reporter*

****Watch this space!****

EA Judicial Review

A peace campaigner and the Reading based national nuclear awareness-raising group, NAG have been granted permission to bring a case for judicial review to challenge the continued manufacture of Trident warheads.

The decision being challenged through judicial review is that of the Environment Agency (EA) to grant authorisations for radioactive discharges to AWEs Aldermaston and Burghfield.

The decision, which took effect on 1st April 2000, enables the new consortium to operate the site. Warhead production, decommissioning and the build up of historic wastes result in radioactive discharges into the air, the local sewage works, to natural watercourses and to the River Thames via the eighteen kilometre Pangbourne pipeline.

According to the Environment Agency's decision document, 45% of alpha discharges to air from AWE at Aldermaston are caused by the continuing production of Trident. "It is time to concentrate on cleaning up this site. We need the government to publish a timetable for zero discharges" said Pam Vassie from NAG.

There is enormous public interest in this decision given that the sites are used for the research, design, development, manufacturing and servicing of Trident warheads. Although the EA believed that radioactive discharges present a negligible risk to health, the public is concerned that past, present and future discharges from AWE accumulate. They contaminate the environment and pose a long-term threat to public health.

Phil Shiner, the lawyer acting in this case said: "This [permission for review] is a judicial endorsement that we have an arguable case. This case challenges the government's continued manufacture of Trident warheads and raises very important public interest points. We say that the EA had to satisfy itself that the project was justified in terms of the benefits to the public, and that it would have made a difference if it had done so properly. We also say that the EA had to consider the International Court of Justice opinion".



Roof occupation at Aldermaston buildings used by the new consortium to plan their takeover.

AWE Aldermaston: leaking like a sieve

Special pull-out supplement

Here there was a special four-page pull-out containing recent press cuttings. Several related to the “papers in the street” incident.

Unfortunately this material is currently not available in the web version of *Update!*

Future camp dates

- June 9-11
 - July 7-9
 - August 11-13
 - September 8-10
- Camp mobile phone
07808 553778

Contact:

AWPC
157 Lyndhurst Rd
Worthing, W Sussex BN 43
Tel: 01639 700 680
Email: aldermastonwpc@hotmail.com

Camps run from around 8pm on Friday, until 2pm on Sunday. All women are welcome; supportive men may visit in daylight hours. The camp is situated near a main road, but is suitable for animals and children when supervised. The camp is fairly accessible, but more information for disabled women is available by contacting AWPC. Please bring a sleeping bag and tent to sleep in if you can. Contact us in advance of a camp if you need to borrow these. Vegetarian and vegan food is communal. Either bring food to share or put money in the kitty. If you are coming by train, aim for Mortimer railway station.

We look forward to seeing you

In the next issue

TP2000 visit Aldermaston - Report on the May Trident Ploughshares Disarmament Camp
NPT — Report on the Non-Proliferation Review Conference, New York

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