

15th August, 1990

Dear Ms Kennedy,

Every day two million gallons of liquid radioactive waste are discharged into the Irish Sea from Sellafield. This has led to nearly half a tonne of plutonium being dumped on the seabed. The House of Commons Environment Select Committee has described the Irish Sea as the most radioactively contaminated sea in the world.

Despite Sellafield's notorious record, reprocessing operations at the plant are set to rise massively, making the pollutions problems of the past seem tame in comparison. British Nuclear Fuels intend to open a huge new reprocessing plant at Sellafield. Called THORP (Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant), it will be fed mainly by spent nuclear fuel from abroad. BNFL are currently importing and stockpiling thousands of tonnes of spent fuel from Japan, West Germany, the Netherlands, Italy and Switzerland awaiting reprocessing at

THORP when it opens in 1992. Approximately 250-300 tonnes of spent fuel is being imported into Britain per year but this is due to rise to between 450 and 500 tonnes annually within the next few years. This highly dangerous material is entering Britain through two ports; through BNFL's own dock at Barrow-in-Furness *and through the commercial port of Dover*. It is shipped to Dover on an ordinary roll-on, roll-off ferry.

Imports of spent fuel through Dover are also about to increase dramatically. From two flasks in 1988 to 16 in 1989, 37 planned this year and over 50 per year by the mid-nineties. This considerable traffic will greatly increase the risk of a major nuclear accident in Dover. Greenpeace recently published a report from an independent engineer which shews that spent fuel flasks are vulnerable to fire. If a flask were to be engulfed in a fire for more than two hours at the relatively moderate temperature of about 900 centigrade it would rupture and release a deadly cloud of radioactive smoke into the environment. In short, a major nuclear accident would occur



A wagon of nuclear waste at Dover.

with catastrophic consequences for the population of Dover and surrounding areas.

Greenpeace is actively opposed to the importation of spent fuel into Britain. It is a dangerous activity in itself and is turning this country into the world's nuclear dustbin. It is particularly dangerous to import spent fuel through a busy commercial port like Dover on notoriously unstable roll-on, roll-off ferries. These vessels and the port itself are ill-equipped to deal with a serious nuclear accident.

The cross-Channel train ferry, which carries spent fuel from Dunkerque to Dover, crosses one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world. We have witnessed a spate of tragic ferry accidents in recent times and the Inquiry into the *Herald of Free Enterprise* disaster has concluded that we can expect to see more serious ferry accidents in the near future. Even more worrying, from the point of view of shipping spent nuclear fuel, is that official shipping records show that the incidence of fires on ships is increasing.


At present, Dover is being used as a convenient 'main gate' by BNFL who are

placing short term profits before the health and safety of the local population and the environment. It is clear that BNFL have not informed Dover District Council nor the local emergency services of the real hazards posed by the transportation of spent fuel; no warning of the arrival of shipments of this material is given to the Fire Brigade, the Police or the Coastguard. Greenpeace believes that unless these shipments through Dover are stopped a major nuclear accident involving a flask of spent fuel is bound to happen sooner or later. Finally, a proportion of radioactivity contained in every flask of spent fuel which comes through Dover, en route to Sellafield, will be dumped into an already severely polluted Irish Sea and potentially lead to more cancer in young children. It is for these reasons that Greenpeace seeks the support of the people of Dover to make it a 'nuclear waste-free' port.

Yours sincerely,  
P. C. Woodward,  
St. Margarets-at-Cliffe,  
Dover

## UPDATE on the LONGMARKET EXCAVATION SITE, CANTERBURY

The excavation is now down to Roman floor levels. A further area of Roman floor mosaic, approximately 3' square, has been revealed. Nearby there is another hypocausted room and what may have been a furnace, complete with arched tunnel. The town house now being excavated must have been two or three storeys high, judging by the foundations.

The plan of the house was  with an ornamental fishpond in the courtyard. Great quantities of pottery fragments, from ordinary domestic to Samian ware, have been found as well as coins, of no great value but much interest.

The archaeologists are excavating what appears to be a Saxon hut which, as a result of a fire, caved in, trapping loom weights and pottery shards beneath it. A cellar below, some 3' deep, was probably used for storage.

The excavation finished and the developers move in at the end of September. Its well worth visiting this fascinating site (again) before then.

P.K.