

NEWS IN BRIEF

US city bans nuclear waste shipments

THE city of Missoula, Montana (population 58,000) banned last week all shipments of nuclear materials through the city limits. Citing two accidents involving trucks carrying nuclear wastes that occurred this winter on Interstate 90 — which runs through the city's northern boundary — as evidence of the hazard involved, the City Council passed the ban by a vote of 7:1. The measure is expected to interfere with the shipment of wastes to the Hanford nuclear plant in eastern Washington. Included in recent shipments to Hanford are wastes from the accident at Three Mile Island in Pennsylvania.

Séveso director killed by political group

THREE men and a woman, ambushed Paolo Paoletti, aged 39, a director of the ICMESA chemical plant in Séveso outside his Monza home last week. The Italian urban guerrilla group, Front Line, claimed responsibility for the assassination. Paoletti was one of several senior ICMESA officials arrested and charged with operating a dangerous factory after four pounds of dioxin were released when a chemical reactor exploded in the factory in 1976. More than 600 children developed acute cases of chloracne as a result of exposure to dioxin. The legal case is still pending with the parent company Hoffman-La Roche of Switzerland expected to admit responsibility for damages caused, but not negligence.

UK radiation study overestimates safety

A BIENNIAL radiation survey conducted by the UK Health and Safety Executive has seriously underestimated the exposure to the workforce at 11 UK nuclear power stations by its exclusion of part-time workers from the study. Although claiming that none of the 7500 nuclear plant workers in either 1977 or 1978 received more than the international limit of 5 rems, the report did not cover an estimated 1500 temporary employees, many of whom were hired to do the hazardous work of pipe delagging in areas heavily exposed to radiation. It is not uncommon in pipe delagging operations for workers to receive their allowed quarterly dose of 2.5 rem in less than two weeks. These workers are then replaced by other temporary employees. An HSE official confirmed that the study did not cover "employees not directly employed by the Central Electricity Generating Board" and said that no figures were available on the numbers hired to do delagging or on the

radiation doses they had received. *Health and Safety: Nuclear Establishments 1977 — 1978 HMSO £1.25.*

More UK nuclear cracks

BOTH gas cooled reactors at Britain's Bradwell nuclear plant in Essex have been shut down to investigate cracks in the welds of the expansion bellows of the primary cooling circuit similar to the ones found in the Dungeness reactors two weeks ago (*Nature*, 17 January, page 238). The first Bradwell reactor had been shut down for routine maintenance when the cracks were discovered. As a safety measure the second reactor was shut down and similar cracks were discovered there as well. The reactors could be off line for a year or more.

UK centre for analysis of technical change

A NEW research centre for analysing technical change with the goal of "increasing national wealth" is to be set up by the Leverhulme Trust in conjunction with the Science Research Council and the Social Science Research Council. Leverhulme will contribute £1.5m towards the centre and the two research councils will each contribute £½ million over a period of the first five years followed by £250,000 a year for the second five years. Sir Michael Swann, FRS, will chair the organising committee and the centre's governing board. The types of issues to be considered include energy and material resources, manufacturing technology and unemployment. The majority of the proposed staff of 20 professionals and 10 supporting staff will be on secondment or will have joint appointments with universities, companies or government establishments.

Vietnam veteran records Agent Orange testimony

CHARLES HARTZ, a US Vietnam war veteran, who was exposed to the dioxin containing defoliant Agent Orange, initiated a massive law suit against the manufacturers of the chemical in Philadelphia last week. Hartz, who suffers from terminal brain cancer, videotaped his testimony accusing the manufacturers of negligence in not testing the chemical for its effect on humans. The pre-trial session had been organised by Hartz' attorney out of fears that Hartz will not live to testify when the trial begins later this year. In spite of objections from the manufacturers, District Judge George Pratt ruled that video tape was the best way of preserving Hartz' testimony. The law suit against Dow, Monsanto, Hercules, Diamond Shamrock and Thompson Heyward is presently being organised by 3000 exposed veterans but is still open to others.

20,000 demonstrate against Brittany reactor

TWENTY thousand demonstrators carrying French and Breton flags braved wind and rain squalls to march from the town hall in Plogoff to the site of a proposed nuclear reactor on Cap Sizan on the wild Brittany coast. Called to form part of a continuous protest to six weeks of hearings lasting until 14 March, the demonstrators plastered the town with slogans including a reminder to the government of its promise of April 1974 that "nuclear power will not be imposed on a population that refuses it".

Sussex physicist appeals to Queen over job

DR ROBERT Golub, a 42-year-old American physicist working at the University of Sussex, has appealed to Her Majesty the Queen over the termination of his research fellowship. The Queen is 'visitor' to the university, a role following from its charitable status; in principle she acts as an ombudsman, caring for "breaches of the rules of natural justice" (in the words of one legal expert) but not for matters of academic merit.

Golub's research fellowship, which is paid for by the Science Research Council, has been renewed regularly since 1968 for his work on ultra-cold neutrons. A new neutron source he devised, using superfluid helium, is to be installed at the Institut Laue Langevin, Grenoble, for 700,000FF (£80,000), but without his assistance. Golub believes that an industrial tribunal would dismiss his case because of a clause in his contract which waives his redundancy rights.

The Privy Council has written to Golub telling him that it could intervene only if the university was guilty of "incorrect procedures or improper motives".



"I don't think you've much chance! Look who's in front of us in the queue!"