



Ministry of Defence ships nuclear material through 'nuclear free zones'. Duncan Campbell reports

## Convoy caught in city

CONVOYS BEARING nuclear weapons and materials are still being taken through the hearts of cities which have declared themselves 'nuclear free zones' - in particular Manchester, Derby, Leeds and London. Earlier this month journalists working for the community journal, *Leeds Other Paper*, were tipped off by an anonymous railway worker and were able to photograph a secret Ministry of Defence nuclear train passing through the Leeds conurbation on a Tuesday afternoon.

The regular trips of the special train carrying nuclear weapons and other 'fissile' nuclear material (i.e. useable for making bombs) were first revealed in the *New Statesman* six months ago (NS 10 April 1981). We described the train's normal composition - an engine, and two 'Observation Saloons', specially converted for the ministry of De-

fence, from which armed police guard the nuclear load travelling on a massive trailer. Since the NS revealed that such shipments were being made through London and other cities, British Rail have claimed in response to public and press inquiries, that they were only shipping 'nuclear waste' from ordinary civil power stations.

When the Leeds photographers saw the train and sent pictures to Yorkshire Television, British Rail again claimed that they were only shipping 'nuclear waste'. But 15 minutes before the company broadcast this denial, BR's story changed: they were carrying 'a classified consignment for the Ministry of Defence' and 'no further comment could be made'. The inference was that a nuclear weapon (or weapons) had just been carted through Leeds.

Although full details of this

### Caught in the act

The two-o'clock nuclear train to Windscale, stopped briefly in the Aire Valley in the heart of the Leeds-Bradford conurbation, on the line between Leeds and Shipley. This train makes regular runs between naval dockyards, nuclear weapons stores, and centres like Windscale. Its contents are 'classified'. Inset (above) closeup of the giant nuclear flask carried by the 90 ton transporter; (right) special ventilation intakes are fitted to each compartment of the attached 'observation saloon' carrying armed MoD police, presumably in case of a radioactive nuclear accident.

particular shipment are unavailable, documents obtained by the NS suggest that it was one of a regular series, coded '6X04', which carry nuclear loads from the Chatham naval dockyard through London, Luton, Bedford, Leicester, Chesterfield, Rotherham, Leeds, Keighley, and on to Windscale (for reprocessing).

The special nuclear trailer, made by Head Wrightson Ltd, was formerly registered in the records of British Rail's 'TOPS' freight computer as a 'Missile Carrier'. Now, according to a BR computer operator, the nuclear shipments have become 'ghost trains' and all details have disappeared from the computer system. This may perhaps have contributed to the train's difficulties as it passed from Leeds to Bradford, where it was photographed. It had to stop for 20 minutes, while another train crossed further up the line.

Road shipments of nuclear materials are apparently taking place in Derby and Manchester. Early this year, regular convoys of three container trucks under police escort were passing north through the centre of Manchester every Thursday. Each container was marked with a bright orange triangle on its rooftop, for aerial observation, and was thus conspicuous to people in tower blocks overlooking Oxford Road, Manchester's main southern artery.

Although neither Manchester police nor any nuclear authority has so far confirmed the contents of the shipments, they are most likely to be shipments of uranium oxide ore which have arrived at Manchester airport and are being conveyed to the Springfields British Nuclear Fuels factory for conversion and enrichment, in order to manufacture weapons or reactor fuel. Subsequently, some of the enriched uranium is taken by road through Derby to be assembled as submarine nuclear fuel rods by Rolls Royce's Nuclear Division, based in the city. □

Peter Kellner reports on the Left's economic values

## False cult of manufacturing

ONE OF Michael Foot's closest aides has mounted a remarkable attack on the notion that a revival of Britain's manufacturing base is vital to economic recovery. At a conference last weekend, organised by the Socialist Economic Review, Henry Neuburger argued 'that if there is anything special about manufacturing, it is especially bad. It is no longer the progressive wing of capitalism; it is relatively unproductive, unpleasant and monopolistic.'

Neuburger joined Foot and Shadow Chancellor Peter Shore as economic adviser last May. Previously he had worked at the Treasury, heading one of its forecasting teams. Neuburger's paper to last weekend's conference\* was written in a purely personal capacity. Even so, the issues it raises are central to the formation of an economic and industrial strategy for any future Labour government. Neuburger writes that:

Money is given to British Leyland or British Steel on a scale which would keep many more

level and poor attainment and behaviour.

Both Drs Yule and Lansdown were members of the 1980 Lawther Committee which ignored the Needleman study and claimed there was 'no convincing evidence of deleterious effects on children with blood lead concentrations below 35ug/100ml'. Their Greenwich study directly contradicts that claim. It found levels in children between 7 and 33ug/100ml and 'significant associations' between those levels and attainment scores on tests of reading, spelling and intelligence - but not of maths.

The study also found an average difference of seven IQ points between children with lead levels of 12ug/100ml and below, and those of 13ug/100ml and above. The Greenwich results so worried DHSS officials that, earlier this year, they urged a total ban on leaded petrol. But in May the Government only reduced the permitted level of lead in petrol.

The Greenwich study report has gone through numerous drafts before next week's publication. Each time it has been monitored by a

group of scientists unsympathetic to the Needleman study and to the current concern over 'normal' lead levels in children.

The Greater London Council has failed to find the cause of the dangerously high lead pollution at Telferscot primary school in Lambeth (see NS 3 April 1981). Telferscot has an average lead level of over 5,000 parts of lead to a million parts of dust (ppm). Children are reckoned at risk when the level goes over 500ppm. Follow-up readings have so far been under the 5,000 mark.

A report on Telferscot to be published next month will only suggest possible causes such as flakes of old leaded paint from a recent redecoration of the school, or 'fall-out' from car maintenance evening classes held at the school. Another suggestion is that the lead came from repainting the school fencing. A recent unpublished survey of 98 Lambeth public playgrounds found that 35 per cent of the fencing and play equipment was covered in paint with a lead content more than double the current safety limit. □