



Photos: Keith Lomax/Leeds Other Paper

## Nuclear train derailed

A GOODS TRAIN with a nuclear waste transporter, said to be empty at the time, was derailed in Holbeck, a district of Leeds, last Wednesday morning. Although the accident provoked an emergency response by the police to a possible radioactivity incident both British Rail and the Central Electricity Generating Board at first denied that nuclear flasks were involved. Police cordoned off the area, and threatened photographers and reporters with arrest if they entered the area in

which the train stood. A fire brigade team surveyed the area with geiger counters, after the train had been rerailed and shunted into a siding. Subsequently the presence of the flask was admitted, but it was claimed (inaccurately) that empty flasks would carry no radioactivity whatsoever. British Rail confirmed that city centre routes for nuclear waste trains are used to avoid 'having to charge (our customers) too much'.

**Duncan Campbell**



### Trident contd

codes', and 'specific... VLF jam-resistant techniques'.

Critically, in view of the public debate on Trident's price-tag, the US is unwilling to give Britain 'budget information, except as necessary to enable the UK to measure the implications of their choice of operating strategy and size of forces'. In other words,

The Ministry of Defence was unwilling to say whether it had or

had not got the 'specific' information which was prohibited. A spokesman suggested that because US and UK submarines sometimes passed each other in the Atlantic, we might know how noisy they were. Did we spy to get the information the US wouldn't hand over, then? 'That's not what I meant.' The Ministry claimed to be 'satisfied' that it had the necessary planning, technical and financial information on Trident despite the US ban. □

## Board defeats motion which says NS shall not be a 'Social Democratic' paper

THE DIRECTORS of the *New Statesman* have again refused to give a straightforward assurance that the paper is not to be pushed into the arms of the Social Democratic Party.

At a meeting on Wednesday this week the board defeated, by five votes to four, the following motion proposed by Professor Peter Townsend and Benedict Nightingale: 'that the board is committed to ensure that the characteristics and policy of the *New Statesman* as a broadly-based and socialist and not a Social Democratic newspaper, independent of all political parties, are perpetuated.' This motion, with specific reference to the SDP, was put in view of widespread concern that the members of the board wished to move the paper to the political centre. (This has been vehemently

denied by some board members.) After the vote, the board also decided that the text of this defeated motion should not be published.

The board approved instead a motion proposed by the chairman, Graham C. Greene, which said that the *NS* should be a 'broadly-based socialist paper which will be independent in the terms stated in its first editorial of 12 April 1913: "we shall deal with all current political, social and intellectual questions; but in doing so we shall be bound by no ties of party, class or creed".'

The latter motion might, in other circumstances, seem to be an undertaking of a sort. However, both Anthony Sampson and Graham C. Greene have said that they think members of the SDP can be called socialists. □

Rob Edwards on a legal victory that came too late

## Plessey sit-in 'torpedoed'

TUESDAY'S unanimous Appeal Court ruling in favour of the Plessey workers in Bathgate effectively legalises sit-ins in furtherance of trade disputes in Scotland. But it is of little more than academic interest to the 200 workers, mostly women, because they had already ended their eight-week sit-in at the weekend.

Earlier this month, the workforce had voted by a large majority to reject an offer by a new Dutch-registered company, Arcotronics Holdings, to buy the plant, on the ground that the deal was conditional on the successful completion of negotiations and allowed Plessey access to the factory. The workers were anxious about the management links between Plessey and the new company and feared asset-stripping.

However, within ten days they had reversed their decision, in line with advice from union officials, in particular those from the AUEW Engineering Section which represents the vast majority of the workforce. AUEW district organiser Tom Adams, divisional organiser Ernie Leslie and national executive member Gavin Laird, along with Norman McIntosh, divisional organiser of the white collar engineers' union, TASS, all lobbied vigorously to get the workers to accept the offer. In the judgment of one of the leading occupiers they managed to 'torpedo' the sit-in. The only significant improvement secured in the original deal was a guarantee by

Plessey to underwrite the wages of 80 employees for a year if Arcotronics went bust. It is argued by some that with the help of the court verdict and mounting labour movement support, more jobs and better terms could have been won by continuing to impound the company's valuable stock and equipment.

It was the union lawyers' misjudged scorn at the idea of fighting Plessey in court that enabled a team of Scottish National Party lawyers to move in and gain kudos from winning the case.

The implications of the legal victory, while presenting employers in Scotland with a major headache may not extend south of the border. The main argument successfully advanced on behalf of the workers was that, as the occupation was a legitimate attempt to get management to begin meaningful negotiations, it was part of an industrial dispute which, under section 13 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1974, should not be dealt with in the courts. It is doubtful whether the same arguments would apply in similar circumstances in England and Wales, where the fact that trespass alone can be actionable means that companies have an added lever to use against an occupying workforce. In Scotland, as a general rule, simple trespass is not an offence unless damages arising from it can be proven.

Meanwhile, following the sit-in and picket organised by the women workers at the Loveable underwear factory in Cumbernauld (see *NS* 19 February 1982) a business consortium has bought the factory and re-employed 90 of the 300 women made redundant in February. □