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BRITISH NUCLEAR FUELS LIMITED

PRESS STATEMENT

YTV PROGRAMME: "Windscale: the nuclear laundry"; the background

Yorkshire Television Limited have been working on their programme about Windscale for more than twelve months and during that time BNFL has provided facilities and detailed information to the programme team.

The Company reached an understanding with Yorkshire Television that it would have a full opportunity in the programme to comment on claims, allegations and criticisms which might be made by other parties or by the programme itself.

BNFL's response, at YTV's suggestion, is not being recorded to complete this programme until the day of broadcast, Tuesday, 1st November. In view of this BNFL has been surprised and concerned that YTV have made available to the Press detailed information about the content of part of this programme before BNFL's response has been given.

We consider this quite incompatible with the assurance we have received from YTV that they wish to be totally fair to the Company.

A particular matter of concern is that despite a special briefing meeting on the subject, which was provided for YTV, their film has made no reference to BNFL's own study of mortality among the Sellafield workforce which shows clearly that among this group of workers, who are exposed to considerably greater radiation than any member of the public, the cancer death rate is below the national rate.

In view of statements made to the Press by YTV, which BNFL considers likely to arouse unjustified alarm, the Company believes that the time has now come to reveal in some detail the background to the making of this programme.

Over an extended period complaints have been made by a number of BNFL employees and also by members of the public about the methods employed by the YTV production team. These have included complaints about intrusion into privacy, allegations that YTV have had access to, and have mis-used, confidential medical records about individuals and that their intrusive methods have caused considerable distress. (YTV deny that they have obtained confidential medical records).

Two examples of the YTV researchers' activities have been the subject of particular complaint and have led to correspondence between an employee's national trade union officer and Lord Thomson, Chairman of the Independent Broadcasting Authority, together with the constituency Member of Parliament and the Managing Director of Yorkshire Television Limited.

In the first of these cases the complaint about intrusion was made by the person concerned directly to YTV, to the IBA and also led to further complaints to the IBA from the individual's trade union and his MP. As a result we understand that apologies for the methods used were proffered by Lord Thomson, Chairman of the IBA and by the YTV researcher concerned. Lord Thomson said that the apologies proffered by YTV reflected YTV's very real and proper concern at the distress it had caused. Lord Thomson also said that YTV's Managing Director had since made it clear to the production team that this sort of approach to members of the public was unacceptable and that they had been forcefully reminded of the need to conduct their enquiries with due sensitivity for the feelings of those being questioned.

Two months later a further complaint was made about the same researcher by another employee of BNFL, who complained to the Chairman of the IBA that YTV had approached his family about his

son's contraction of cancer, which had been diagnosed only a month previously. The father wrote to Lord Thomson that he and his wife found the approach distressing and were concerned that the researcher claimed to have "forgotten" where he had acquired this information.

As a result of that complaint, which was taken up by the employee's trade union and by his MP, we have been told that Lord Thomson wrote to the individual concerned saying that he wholly understood and sympathised with his reactions. The matter had been taken up with the Managing Director of YTV who had made it clear to the IBA that his company was deeply concerned about what had happened and had taken firm action to ensure that the same kind of incident did not take place again.

Mr Paul Fox, the Managing Director of YTV, also wrote to the individual saying that he was deeply disturbed and apologised in the most unqualified way for the distress which was felt following his (the researcher's) visit. The researcher had gone against the policy of YTV in making approaches to individuals in this way, and all the people concerned in this project had received specific instructions not to attempt to make this sort of contact.

Mr Fox said that as a consequence the researcher had been removed from the project and the producer relieved of responsibility.

The producer concerned was Mr James Cutler, who had been BNFL's principal point of contact with YTV. In view of his Managing Director's statement that he had been relieved of responsibility BNFL has been surprised and concerned that in the last few days Mr Cutler has been speaking to the Press about the content of the filmed part of the programme.

BNFL takes particular exception to the statement attributed to him in one local newspaper that their research had been made difficult "because BNFL has a very tight grip on the local community". BNFL is clear that any difficulties the YTV team have experienced have been of their own making.

BNFL's position in respect of this programme is that it emphatically rejects YTV's allegation of "a disturbing, potentially dangerous situation threatening not only the immediate neighbourhood of this huge atomic plant (Windscale) but further afield."

BNFL's full response to these allegations will be given in the programme itself next Tuesday provided that YTV uphold the promise they gave BNFL seven months ago that they would give BNFL reasonable opportunity within the programme to answer any serious criticisms made against us.

BNFL has under consideration the possibility of making a formal complaint to the Independent Broadcasting Authority against the one-sided advance publicity which has been given to this programme which we consider is contrary to the frequent assurances we have received from YTV of their desire to be fair.

A final decision on this matter will, however, be deferred until after the completion and broadcast of this programme.

END

31 October 1983