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30 January 1986

The Prime Minister has asked me to thank you very much indeed for the beautiful album which you enclosed with your letter of 29 January. It was kind of you to compile and send this momento of the visit which the Prime Minister so enjoyed.

CAROLINE RYDER

C. Addday, Esq.

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From the Chairman and Chief Executive

British Nuclear Fuels plc

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29th January, 1986.

The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, MP.,
10, Downing Street,
LONDON SW1

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Thank
QR

Dear Prime Minister,

The photographs in the enclosed album record your visits to British Nuclear Fuels' sites last November. I hope they will provide you with a record of what was, for the Company, a momentous day.

With our renewed thanks.

Yours sincerely,

Con Allday
C. Allday



10 DOWNING STREET

Mr Wickes

Attached is a
Baker Souvenir's issue
of the newspaper
& mark the PM's visit.
I am sending the PM
me, too

[Handwritten signature]



DROPPING IN: Mrs. Thatcher arrives at Capenhurst by helicopter.

MY FAITH IN NUCLEAR POWER



LOOKING IN: The Prime Minister is shown a model of SIXEP by the plant's project manager, Mike Howden (right), accompanied by Reprocessing Operations Director Gordon Steele (left) and Chairman Con Allday.

'This industry has a great future'

— MRS. THATCHER

PRIME Minister Margaret Thatcher has pledged her wholehearted support for the nuclear industry.

In a message to company employees, she told BNFL News that it was her intention "to put Britain right back on top with the nuclear industry."

Mrs. Thatcher was speaking at the end of a tour of BNFL's three main operating sites and Heysham nuclear power station, which culminated in her officially opening two new major plants at Sellafield — the Fuel Handling Plant (FHP) and Site Ion-Exchange Effluent Plant (SIXEP).

Congratulating employees on the work they were doing, the Prime Minister said: "I think this industry has a very great future."

Leaders

The main purpose of her tour had been, she said, "to demonstrate complete faith in and enthusiasm for Britain's nuclear power industry".

About 100 special guests at the opening ceremony were told by Mrs. Thatcher that Britain had led the world with nuclear technology. "I should like to think that one day we will lead again and I know that, in many areas, we are still way ahead."

Mrs. Thatcher's flying visit by RAF helicopter began when she dropped in at Capenhurst.

Then, it was on to Springfields, Heysham and Sellafield.

EXCLUSIVE interview with the Prime Minister See Centre Pages

Premier's flying visit . .



CAPENHURST



THE TOUR BEGINS: A smiling Mrs. Thatcher chats with works general manager Peter Roberts as she visits the uranium hexafluoride building in the enrichment plant.



VIEW FROM THE TOP: Mrs. Thatcher in the enrichment plant.

'Research and scientific expertise have been turned into profitable industry and good jobs'



THE Prime Minister's first port of call was Capenhurst, which she described as "a huge success story". Referring to BNFL as the most experienced nuclear fuel company in the world, she said she had learned that the site's research and expertise had been turned into profitable industry and good jobs for Britain.

Mrs. Thatcher's tour opened with presentations on Capenhurst operations by works general manager Peter Roberts and on the work of the Enrichment Division by

Enrichment Director Neville Chamberlain. They then accompanied the Premier around the centrifuge assembly and enrichment plants, where she met employees.

The site was getting a large slice of the enrichment market, Mrs. Thatcher was told, because "we have superior technology".

That response was significant, she said, because "it demonstrates that there is nothing to fear from superior technology, except that other people might get it before you".



ABOVE: IN THE HELICOPTER... Mrs. Thatcher gets a helping hand from Downing Street secretary Monica Jelley.



FAR LEFT: MEDIA MÊLÉE... The Premier faces the Press.

LEFT: JUST LANDED... The Prime Minister passes newly-laid turf lifted by the updraft from the helicopter's blades.

Pictures by **MARTIN NIELD**



Premier's flying visit . .



SPRINGFIELDS



WELCOME (left): Dr. Michael Horsley greets Mrs. Thatcher as she arrives at Springfields.
BUS SERVICE (above): The Prime Minister is driven from the AGR fuel fabrication plant to the apprentice training centre.



DEMONSTRATION: Instrument mechanic apprentice Andrew Byard explains a computer-controlled system used for apprentice training. Looking on is instructor Mike Head.

'Everything is meticulously inspected and controlled'

NEXT stop for the Prime Minister was Springfields where she toured the AGR and Magnox fuel fabrication plants. She also visited the apprentice training centre, where work by apprentices for handicapped children was on display.

Mrs. Thatcher received an outline of the Fuel Division's commercial activities from the Divisional Director, Dr. Tony Stephens.

Details of work on the site were presented by general manager, Dr. Michael Horsley, while assistant general manager Dr. Peter Manning explained the production process.

Mrs. Thatcher found the Springfields

site just as impressive as Capenhurst. "The whole process is so clean and everything meticulously inspected and controlled," she said. "And there again, we are exporting heavily."

There were congratulations from the Prime Minister for the high number of apprentices — "very fine young men and women" — being trained by the company.

Also important was the fact that the site provided a large number of jobs. "It's very valuable to Lancashire," she said.

Asked about safety, Mrs Thatcher said. "This industry has a very good record. Compare it with the coal industry, with oil and gas from the North Sea. It is a safe industry and getting safer all the time." She added: "I personally would prefer

to live near a nuclear power station than a coal-fired one."

This was appropriate, as the next stop on the Prime Minister's tour was Heysham nuclear power station which, she said, had been built to time and very close to cost.

"The people there want more nuclear power stations built as, indeed, I want more built," the Prime Minister said, "because the electricity from nuclear power is the cheapest we can get."

Pictures by ARTHUR PICKETT and DON HOPPER



COMMUNITY HELP: Mrs. Thatcher chats with apprentice fitters Richard Kettle and Joe Costall about an invalid car they are building for the British Limbless Ex-Servicemen's Association.



INSPECTION: Mrs. Thatcher studies an AGR fuel pin at Mustaq Roked's machine.



EXPLAINING: Doug Mitchell, works manager, Magnox Fuel and Components, shows the Prime Minister fuel elements awaiting final assembly: Looking on are Mr. Allday and Dr. Horsley.

More Springfields pictures on Page 6

EXCLUSIVE: Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher



Mrs. Thatcher in the pond hall of the Fuel Handling Plant with Con Allday (right) and Derek Bamber, works manager, Ponds (East).



The Prime Minister tours the UF6 building at Capenhurst.



Mrs. Thatcher chats to Springfields apprentices John Ashton and Elizabeth Taylor during her visit to the site.



Lesley Bode, a second-year electrical apprentice at Sellafield, presents a bouquet to the Prime Minister.

‘As a scientist, I profoundly believe that Britain needs a thriving nuclear industry and is fortunate

What role do you expect Britain's nuclear industry to play in the future?

I am sure nuclear power is going to be a major source of energy for Britain. I have no doubt that it has a great future. Although we had the world's first commercial nuclear power station at Calder Hall, we have been rather slow to develop nuclear's full potential. Now we are paying a

price in dearer energy, which is in turn reflected in industry's costs and jobs.

The French, of course, get about 60 per cent of their electricity from nuclear power while the UK proportion is under 20 per cent. Do you agree that this gives the French advantages in cheap electricity and what does the Government propose to do about it?

Yes, indeed, it does help France to compete internationally. The less the overheads — costs — imposed on your industry, the easier it is for your companies to win job-creating or job-preserving orders. We need to get our industrial costs down because they are rising more rapidly than those of our major competitors.

We cannot look to nuclear power for much immediate help in this because we have been slow to develop it, but in the longer term nuclear power will be an indispensable part of our industrial and economic strength.

The Government I lead believes in nuclear power and we will steadily develop its potential.

Many people in the nuclear industry feel that nuclear power is singled out for special treatment in relation to measures to protect the environment, and this adds on more costs. Bearing in mind the risks associated with other industries, do you feel that in the nuclear industry's case the balance between industrial advancement and environmental protection is right? Does the government regard the nuclear industry as a special case and is this justified?

Your question reminds me so much of the days when the railways were being developed and men were required to walk before the engine with a red flag. Contrast that with the recent record-breaking run between London and Newcastle at an average speed, I believe, of over 125 mph! Railways are undoubtedly one of the safest forms of travel, but people were naturally very, very careful about the first iron horses.

It is therefore only natural — and indeed sensible — that we should develop

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nuclear power. The one sure power's future stations, and tions, safely a

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In nuclear's the materials a

Margaret Thatcher talks to BNFL News

eve



Mrs. Thatcher tries her hand (left) with a master slave manipulator in the Fuel Handling Plant and (right) discusses the decanning process.

in the one that it has already got

exclusive interview with V YOUNG, Editor of BNFL Print Minister Margaret points out that Britain has experience of the safe and operation of nuclear power the process of scientific ad- should make it even safer." Thatcher, speaking before her the company's three main

operating sites, says she is in no doubt that nuclear is going to be a major source of energy in Britain and believes the industry has a great future.

The Prime Minister deals with questions ranging from safety to overseas contracts and from anti-nuclear activities to winning public acceptability.

linked with opposition to nuclear weapons.

A major issue in the nuclear industry is the public acceptability of nuclear power. Do you feel the industry might be doing more to promote this?

However irrational or misguided the opposition towards nuclear may be, I think you are right to identify public acceptability as a major, and perhaps THE major issue confronting you. There is, as I say, no doubt that we know how to run the nuclear industry safely, efficiently, competitively and successfully.

But, just as democratic governments need to persuade the public of their competence and virtues, so industries like nuclear power need, in a democracy, to do their bit to win public confidence.

This, as the accidental discharges at Sellafield two years ago sharply underlined, calls for a wholehearted effort on the part of everyone working in the company to avoid such incidents, however slight their real effect.

As the judge said, this incident hurt no-one and put no-one at risk. But this serves only to emphasise the need for the nuclear industry to explain itself better and put the real, rather than the imagined risks into perspective.

It has not only to operate its plants carefully, considerately and well; it has to inform the people, who hear so many conflicting claims and allegations, about the nature of the industry and its achievements.

If public acceptability is the key to your future, then it is right that the industry should give it the closest attention.

I hope you can now put behind you the events of earlier this year and demonstrate, in the face of what will be resourceful opposition, that Britain needs a thriving nuclear industry and is fortunate in the one that it has already got.

As a scientist, I profoundly believe that to be the case. But you — everyone who works in the industry — are your own best advocates and I look forward to hearing you telling the world how safe and successful you are.



Dressed for the part — Mrs. Thatcher in the FHP.

with care and due caution. way of protecting nuclear is to run our power all the associated opera- and efficiently.

ve 30 years' experience of efficient operation and, in nuclear power has demon- strated as the cheapest form of energy, taking into account the protection of the public and

tion must continue — and standards. And the process of advance should make nuclear safer. So the future is very

regard the safety record of the nuclear industry in the UK, and of its more controver- sial, reprocessing?

board of the nuclear industry, with other industries in the world. And the health of its employees and the public is second to none, too, both in safety and consistency. I do not see reprocessing as particularly

one facet of the total picture. It is one that deals with the production and disposal or storage of nuclear fuel. These are familiar operations in many other industries, some of which are carried out with absolutely — and with the same substances.

In any case, the difference is that with reprocessing is that it is radioactive to a greater

or lesser degree. But we know how to handle them safely.

Indeed, our hospitals could not do the fantastic job they do for us these days without radioactive chemicals and X-rays.

So, to put it simply, I don't regard reprocessing as unusual, let alone controversial, however hard some people try to make it appear so.

And I am supremely confident in the ability of our nuclear scientists and engineers to maintain the industry's frankly enviable safety record.

In the company's annual report, reference was made to an increase in exports last year by BNFL of 40 per cent. How important do you think it is for Britain's nuclear industry to get into and remain in the export business?

BNFL is a major export earner both through fuel fabrication and reprocessing. You are undoubtedly our largest source of Japanese yen because of all the business you do with Japan. In this way you are contributing handsomely to our national economic well-being.

Competition in the world market will get tougher, but I look to BNFL not only to hold our share but also to expand our export trade.

The nuclear industry is uniquely one Britain pioneered and I don't want to see us lose our hold on the world's business — as we have in so many other sections of industry. Nor, for that matter, does West Cumbria, I am sure.

What is your attitude to attempts by anti-nuclear organisations to close down Sellafield and their efforts to prevent the building of further nuclear reactors?

I think the opposition is understandable and perhaps inevitable but at the same time irrational and misguided. It is also somewhat ironic since nuclear power is a classic example of how swords can be beaten into ploughshares — converting the destructive potential of nuclear fission into a source of clean energy.

History shows that there are always rearward actions against any scientific development. Not all of this is bad, to the extent that it makes for a safer, more careful and sensitive industry. But the kind of opposition that we see to nuclear power is certainly irrational when, for example, you think of the appalling death toll over the years in the coal mines. However, I think a lot of the opposition must be desperate, bearing in mind the extent to which it relies on scaremongering.

What do you think is the main cause of opposition to nuclear energy?

I am not sure there is one main cause. Undoubtedly, there are many people who are genuinely concerned for the environment and others who seem to fear nuclear because it is different or "unnatural". We have to respond to their fears with our safety measures. We have to respect their point of view, but I think we resist change and scientific progress at our peril.

Some of the opposition is political,

MORE SPRINGFIELDS PICTURES



ABOVE: FUEL EFFICIENCY . . . "This AGR fuel assembly will hold the energy equivalent of 2,800 tonnes of coal," Mrs. Thatcher told reporters.



LEFT: CLOSER LOOK . . . The Prime Minister watches uranium rods being inserted into Magnox cans.

BELOW: QUALITY ASSURED . . . David Taylor, a Quality Assurance inspector, explains how welds made electronically are checked with the aid of VDUs.



ON THE SCREEN . . . Television cameras give operative Robert Taylor a clearer picture at a decanner control station in the FHP at Sellafield.

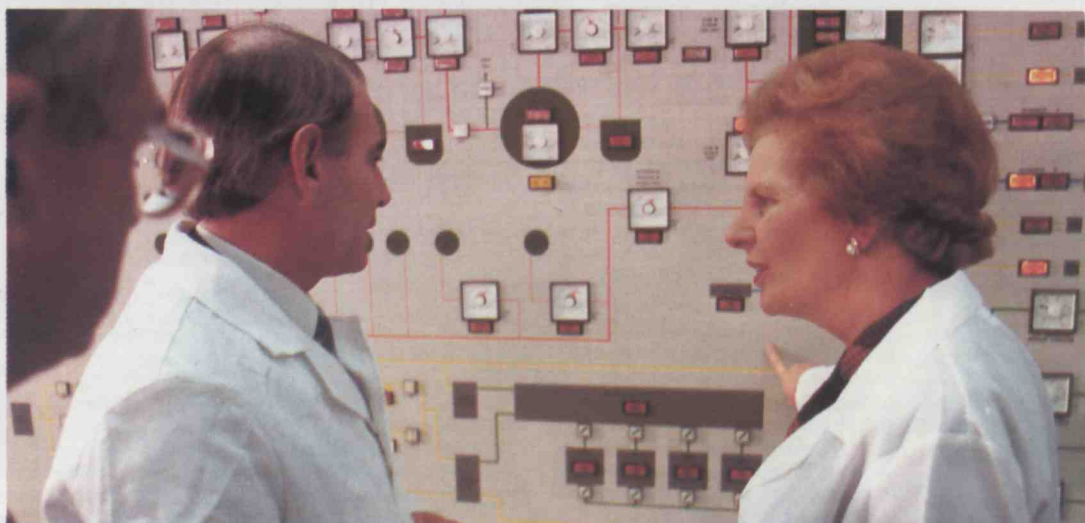


ABOVE: QUESTION TIME . . . Kathy Harvey, from Radio Cumbria, interviews Mrs. Thatcher in the Pond Hall of the FHP.



LEFT: ON THE RAILS . . . FHP project manager Peter Riley in discussion with the Prime Minister above a sub-pond in the plant.

BELOW: CENTRE OF OPERATIONS . . . SIXEP project manager Mike Howden explains a point to the Premier in the plant's control room



Premier's flying visit . .



SELLAFIELD



LEFT: DISPLAY PANEL . . . Steve Baxter, SIXEP commissioning manager, gives a guided tour of the control room. **ABOVE: REMOTE CONTROL . . .** Tony Jewell shows his skill with a master-slave manipulator. **RIGHT: PICK A CARD . . .** Mrs. Thatcher tests one of the games in Sellafield's permanent exhibition centre, in which a geiger counter identifies a card covering radioactive rock.



MEET THE MAYOR: Among the special guests was the Mayor of Copeland, Councillor Edwin Calvin.

'Safety record is best in the world'

THE Prime Minister rounded off her tour of nuclear installations in the North West by formally opening BNFL's new Fuel Handling Plant (FHP) and the Site Ion Exchange Effluent Plant (SIXEP) at Sellafield.

The £315 million FHP, formerly called Pond 5, is a fuel receipt, storage and decanning facility. It will increase capacity and throughput for reprocessing spent Magnox fuel, with provision for dealing with fuel from advanced gas-cooled reactors (AGRs).

SIXEP, which cost about £126 million and came into operation this year, will reduce liquid radioactive discharges substantially. The plant uses an alumina silicate called Clinoptilolite as a filtering agent. This will reduce discharges of caesium and strontium to a tenth of the maximum amounts released in recent years.

Mrs. Thatcher followed the opening ceremony with a tour of the FHP and SIXEP. She then viewed the early stages of the Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant (THORP) due for completion in 1990.

Speaking during her visit to the site, the Premier emphasised the importance of the work being undertaken at Sellafield "to see that we have absolute safety in our nuclear fuel reprocessing plants."

It was important, she added, for everyone in this country — and for those who purchase our products — to know that Britain's safety measures are among the best in the world.

"And I would like to stress that the safety record of our nuclear power industry is unsurpassed anywhere in the world."

Mrs. Thatcher concluded her visit with the message that Britain has a tremendous asset in the nuclear industry.

"We must set our faces forward and proclaim its achievements from the housetops," she said.



MODEL GIFT: Fourth-year apprentice fitter David Burr presents Mrs. Thatcher with a miniature Magnox flask.



ABOVE: CONVERSATION PIECE . . . The Premier listens attentively to Derek Bamber during her tour of the FHP. **LEFT: INFORMAL CHAT . . .** Mrs. Thatcher meets FHP shift manager Ian Hunter (left) and commissioning team leader John Potter.

Pictures by ROGER SAVAGE and DAVID LEACH

Historic moment as Mrs Thatcher opens new plants

CURTAIN UP ON A NEW ERA AT SELLAFIELD



● ABOVE: Mrs. Thatcher unveils the commemorative plaque bearing her name.
 ● LEFT: Speaking at the opening ceremony.



● ABOVE: BNFL Chairman and Chief Executive Con Allday welcomes the Prime Minister to Sellafield.

● LEFT: Part of the audience who witnessed the official opening of the FHP and SIXEP.

● RIGHT: Mrs. Thatcher, accompanied by Reprocessing Operations Director Gordon Steele, signs the visitors' book.

