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From the Eurodif plant to a new plant "George Besse II"

France is going to change her method of enriching uranium

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France is going to change her method of enriching uranium, abandoning the gas-diffusion process used in the Eurodif plant and building a new plant "George Besse II" which will use the centrifugation process.

We have learnt this recently through a media release from CLADE (the anti-waste collective in the Limoges region), and we value the useful information it gives about the processes used for enriching so-called natural uranium and for the light it sheds on the implications of the "Georges Besse II" nuclear plant which is scheduled to begin production in late 2007: this is the very source of the "fuel" which will feed all France's nuclear plants in a few years time.

CLADE is right to say that "the enrichment of uranium lies at the heart of the whole nuclear industry, for both civilian and military uses", and to emphasise the fact that this is a strategic matter - as is the future building of an EPR prototype in Flamanville (this was decided by EDF, AREVA, the CEA and the Government even before the current "public debate" occurred which is intended to give at a "democratic blessing"), or the opening of a site for "stockage in depth" (i.e.burial) of the nuclear wastes which are highly radioactive and long-lasting. This latter project will come before Parliament in early 2006 but is already "sewn up" and will be presented as "the only solution available", even though this "solution" has huge disadvantages and has not been made the subject of serious objective scientific study.

From the **production of the "fuel"** for the nuclear plants - uranium enriched in U235 (which can after further enrichment become weapons-grade uranium), to the handling of **the wastes** produced during its **"combustion"** - these include plutonium,and the explosive used in A-bombs (and in H-bombs too, as a spark for the fusion of hydrogen) - each step in these processes is a major link in the chain of "nuclear collaboration" between the civilian and military uses of nuclear technology (the military adds further links). But there is no doubt that the whole chain depends on the first link. One proof of this is the current argument about Iran.

Disagreeing with the present government, with past governments of all tendencies and with certain political and trade-union forces that claim to be in opposition, the French antinuclear movement unanimously advocates the "phasing-out of nuclearism". However, the speed and the methods of this "phasing-out" are still being debated. ACDN France is a contributor to this debate but will not declare its position until the different "exit scenarios" being elaborated are clear.

Following our custom, we wish to emphasize to those who want France to abandon nuclear power-generation (as we do) that this can never occur unless France at the same time plans to renounce its nuclear strike force. Conversely, to those who wish to abolish nuclear weapons (as we do) we emphasize that abolition implies the abandoning, by France and all others, of nuclear technology for electicity, it implies eliminating the nuclear plants.

The inextricable links between civilian and military nuclearism, their intrinsic dangers, and the compelling need to rid the planet of both, these have become obvious to the antinuclear movement worldwide, except in France.

We have many times brought proofs of this, for example at the first Nuclear Disarmament Days which we organised in Saintes in May 2001, the first Colloquium on phasing-out civilian and military nuclearism (Saintes, May 2003), the first Rally for International Disarmament, Nuclear, Biological and Chemical (RID-NBC) in Saintes, October 2004, and also in the workshop on "Civilian Nuclearism and Proliferation" at the 2nd Nuclear Disarmament Day (in Vénissieux) or at the demonstration in Bar-le-duc (24 September 2005) against the burial of nuclear wastes.

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This matter is on the agenda for the **2nd RID-NBC (Saintes, 6-7-8 May 2006),** to which we invite all those who have similar views.

And right now we invite you to sign, on this website, the **"Open Letter to the powerful of this world": "State of Emergency for Planet Earth".**

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