

Peoples Weapons Inspectors Denied Access to Nuclear Weapons Planning Centres.

A parliamentary vote on whether to replace the Trident nuclear submarine system due in March. Sanctions against Iran are being escalated because the leadership will not give up enriching uranium. An inspection of plans by corporations in the UK and Government to breach the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty therefore seemed appropriate. Dressed in white protective overalls and clearly labelled Weapons Inspectors members of the Ploughshares peoples disarmament group visited the London headquarters of six corporations involved in making Nuclear Weapons Systems. These were Serco, BNFL, and Lockheed Martin, who jointly manage Atomic Weapons Establishment, Aldermaston where new nuclear weapons are developed, Rolls Royce who make the nuclear propulsion plant for the Trident submarines, Rio Tinto who mine the uranium which is used to both to make nuclear weapons and drive the submarines, BAE Systems who design and build the submarines and Raytheon a US company who build nuclear missiles. After their endeavours to uncover breaches of UK Treaty and International Law obligations they sought to present their results to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

One party of 6 inspectors first visited the unassuming offices of Serco in Hand Court, High Holborn. This is the office from which the announcement of the contract to provide services at Atomic Weapons Establishment was made. A man in a suit and overcoat arrived as the inspectors waited for a response to their ringing of the answerphone. He appeared very agitated and pushed one of the inspectors. They were trying not to get in this way. Before any of them had explained why they were there he said that the work there had nothing to do with Aldermaston. He was let in by a woman. She would not let the inspectors in. Despite repeated requests to be admitted and one attempt to gently but firmly keep the door open the staff both denied entry and any responsibility for nuclear weapons. The inspectors left a letter seeking access for further inspections on the same prerequisites as the Saddam Hussein's Government were required to comply with by the International Atomic Energy Authority.

The inspector's reception at Rio Tinto in St James Square was very different. On walking unimpeded into the imposing reception area two inspectors were politely asked by the man on the reception desk who they wished to see. The lead inspector explained that they had come to investigate the part that Rio Tinto played in providing uranium for present and future Trident missile systems. The receptionist then rang the offices and asked for somebody to come and speak to the Nuclear Weapons Inspectors. They were then asked to sit and wait. One man saw the two inspectors and asked what we wanted. When he heard he hastily retreated towards the lift saying they should speak to media relations. His embarrassment was relieved by the appearance of Nick Cobban, media relations adviser. He listened politely, took a note of the inspectors questions and promised a reply in writing. He declined the request for immediate access to the offices.

65 Buckingham Gate, Headquarters of both British Nuclear Fuels and Rolls Royce had already been visited by the second team of inspectors. As soon as the team arrived the security locked the sliding doors on the outside of the glass sided entry lobby. There were more sliding doors on the inside which were presumably also locked. Behind them in the reception area stood two security men. The inspectors explained over the entry phone that they had come to inspect the plans of both companies to build new nuclear weapons. They were not invited in. Fairly soon after their arrival a police car drove up with its blue light

flashing. The senior police officer informed the inspector's that they would be arrested for trespassing if they went inside. It was pointed out to him that they were there to uphold the law and that they had good grounds for believing that really serious crimes were being planned inside the building. They asked for a spokesperson from each company to come and speak with them. No officer of either had come out to tell the inspectors if they were to be permitted to go in. The police officer said he would go in and get somebody out to tell them they were trespassing. He went inside and spoke to security and staff but nobody came out for at least 20 minutes.

The inspectors remained ready with their clip boards to conduct their inspection. As they waited three or four businessmen arrived and attempted to enter the building. They were prevented from doing so. The inspectors explained why they were there and what had happened. It appears they had arrived for a lunchtime meeting at Rolls Royce. They had to remain outside until a man from Rolls Royce public relations came out to answer the inspectors questions.

In response to the question what was his companies role in work on replacement of Trident he confirmed that Rolls Royce do provide the nuclear propulsion plant for the present Trident submarines. If the Government decided to replace them Rolls Royce would bid for the contract to provide the new nuclear propulsion plant. Because of the quality of their work he thought they had a good chance of getting the contract. He expected that they would build the propulsion systems for Royal Naval submarines for the foreseeable future. He did not, however, know what the NNPT was. The lead inspector explained that it was the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. It laid an obligation on the UK Government to take steps to reduce its nuclear arsenal not upgrade or replace it. This treaty is legally binding. The PR man said that that was a matter for the Government. When asked if Rolls Royce would supply propulsion systems to a country he knew would use weapons of mass destruction delivered from submarines he asserted that Rolls Royce followed all the Government guidelines. His response to subsequent questions was to lay moral and legal responsibility on the Government and to maintain they kept within the law and guidelines. When asked whether in serving the interests of his shareholders the company would not use its considerable lobbying power to secure a replacement for Trident he simply reiterated that it was a matter for the democratically elected national Government. He also stated "We build the propulsion systems. The use of those systems is a mater for the national government. He was asked if he were aware of the Nuremberg Principles. He said yes. Arguing that his company or an individual is obeying orders from a higher authority is no defence to crimes against humanity. This principle is brought into UK statute law and strengthened by the International Criminal Courts Act. The inspectors finally asked if Rolls Royce had a Corporate Social Responsibility Policy. He replied that they had but he had not got in his pocket at the moment. He promised to send a copy to the Trident Ploughshares address.

Members of the inspection team took the results of their inspection to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. They politely refused entry by the security and advised to write to Charles Street or e-mail fco@gov.org.uk

The inspection supported the suspicion that these companies are not only maintaining the Trident Nuclear weapons system but are ready and keen to contribute to its replacement. They want to avoid the moral and legal responsibility for complicity in preparing such terrible, immoral and illegal weapons by passing it to the Government. So did the companies that built the Nazi gas chambers and ran the trains to them.

CG 28/2/07