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Dear Jeff,

The NGO/CBO Discussion in Hull

I certainly think you should continue to explore and I hope I may join your workshop in March. I don't disagree with anything in your discussion notes, but I sense that cultural differences lie so deeply behind the subject that I would like to amplify your notes a little.

Time

Not uncommon for NGOs to have NO staff, no office, no money and to be motivated by little else beside conscience and a sense of what is right (and wrong). What time they may have is very variable and unpredictable; when they have to prioritise they often do it on a basis of where their heart and energy happen to be. And if that seems deplorable, remember that that is all, usually, that keeps them going. Not pay, nor contracts nor promotion nor career.

Training

It may have been as you write, but I think it is more a matter of both industry and NGOs becoming more acquainted with and respectful of each others' cultures and ways of working. Unless we do, it is very difficult to avoid giving offence, both ways. And there are some direct clashes that are almost inevitable, vis. Secrecy v. transparency; shareholder profit v. the commonweal (see how sensitive?)

Creating precedents

The funding of NGO/CBO participation would be peanuts compared with the costs that industry and DTI spend without even thinking of it on, say, publicity and spin - each of which works against relationships with NGO/CBOs.

Image and Reputation

It's not just about image, nor danger. The role of many NGOs is to keep clear enough of industry to avoid co-option and compromise. This can only change slowly, as industry demonstrates it can be trusted.

(Remember where I'm coming from - ISOLUS, where industry have appeared about as arrogant and secretive and shifty as is possible.)

Cynicism

It is much more than being wary of potential motivation. It is the perception that industry is always trying to pull a fast one, either on NGOs or on competitors; that they are "the enemy"; that they will cut corners unless they are constantly watched; that their publicity and spin are always suspect; that they are propped up by government against the public good; and that government will help them to evade

NGOs efforts. And, given the history of the nuclear industry particularly, this is not surprising. This is the background from which some NGOs have to emerge. And they are going to need help.

* Paying a modest daily rate and expenses can cause problems, because then the NGO may feel there are expectations of it that it hasn't the infrastructure (or perhaps the desire) to fulfil.

* About NGO/CBOs organising into some form of body - it's not so much the differences between these organisations that would make for difficulties; more that most share doubts over yet another tier of organisation making demands upon us, and suspicion that it would "institutionalise" and co-opt us. Anyhow, the differences between us are the normal state of the world; it's not as "organised" as industry and government would have it, and we are suspicious of such abnormalisation.

* Wariness about clean-up problems It is only a difficulty if industry are in denial about it, or arrogant, vis. the navy and its nuclear hulks. Frankness and humility could do a lot to help.

* Better cooperation between NGO/CBOs. Yes. certainly this is badly needed, and it is a problem that lessens our effectiveness in many directions. It is partly a matter of priorities: we are all overstretched and under resourced. And many of us see that government and capitalism have deliberately worked to produce these states of affairs, including the divide and rule one!

* Fragility of the information system - this is always a limiting factor, but particularly when linked to poor infrastructure in NGOs.

* Identifying those who are stakeholders - one often finds that industry has known who they are for years and has bred them to order, vis communities around nuclear power stations. (There's cynicism for you!)

* The local liaison committee at Sizewell was such a disgracefully secretive and stitched-up farce that, after many years of derision and complaint by the Shut Down Sizewell campaign, we understand that some modification is in hand (Chair of SDSC, Charles Barnett, 01728 648300, may know more).

Sorry this is so scruffy. I hope it is not too rude?

Best wishes,