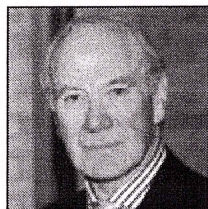


Anger at £1bn nuclear announcement

Published: Tue, 19 Jul 2005 16:54:00 GMT+01
Author: Daniel Forman



The Liberal Democrats have called for a full debate on the government's decision to upgrade Britain's nuclear weapons facilities.

The Ministry of Defence used a written statement to MPs on Tuesday to tell the Commons that £350m will be spent in each of the next three years on the controversial

Menzies Campbell: Call for open debate Aldermaston weapons establishment (AWE).

In a Commons written answer, defence secretary John Reid said: "In the absence of the ability to undertake live nuclear testing - given that the UK has signed and ratified the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty - it is necessary to invest in the facilities at AWE which will provide assurance that the existing Trident warhead stockpile is reliable and safe."

But Lib Dem foreign affairs spokesman Sir Menzies Campbell said the subject was too important to be announced in such a way.

He called for a full debate in the Commons, where MPs could question ministers and challenge their conclusions.

"Announcements of this kind should not be made by way of written ministerial statements," he said.

"These investments raise fundamental questions about our nuclear deterrent, which should be the subject of open debate in the House of Commons."

The Berkshire plant has been the focus for anti-nuclear protests throughout its 50-year history.

Campaigners believe spending on the weapons is unnecessary and environmentally dangerous.

Times online 20 July 2005

The Ministry of Defence is to spend £1 billion over the next three years to upgrade Britain's nuclear weapons plants at Aldermaston and Burghfield in Berkshire (Michael Evans writes).

The announcement provided the first indication that the Government is looking ahead to the expected decision during this Parliament to replace the present Trident nuclear deterrent, which will come to the end of its service in about 2020. The MoD said: "Today's announcement of planned investment is required to sustain the existing warhead stockpile in service."

Sir Menzies Campbell, the Liberal Democrat spokesman on foreign affairs, said: "These investments raise fundamental questions about our nuclear deterrent which should be the subject of open debate in the House of Commons."