

Local MP to call for statement on nuclear submarine faults

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JOHN McFALL, the Labour MP for Dumbaron, will tonight raise allegations of defective nuclear submarines at Clyde Submarine Base, Faslane, during the navy debate in the Commons.

Mr McFall, whose constituency includes the base on the Gare Loch, will press the Government for a statement on the condition of the Polaris and Valiant Class submarines. The select defence committee has already asked for a report on the condition of all Britain's nuclear subs.

The Ministry of Defence said last week that all Britain's nuclear submarines would be checked after a technical defect was discovered in the 23-year-old Warspite, which is being repaired at the Devonport Dockyard in Plymouth.

By GRAEME STEWART

Mr McFall's action comes after it was revealed that the Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament had received three anonymous telephone calls over the past fortnight about alleged cracks in the main reactor coolant circuit of the subs. They claimed that the boats have been detained at Faslane because the emergency back-up cooling system on board does not work.

The first anonymous call claimed there were cracks around what the caller described as the leg pipework in the primary circuits in the steam generators and that the Royal Navy did not know how to fix them.

When asked how serious

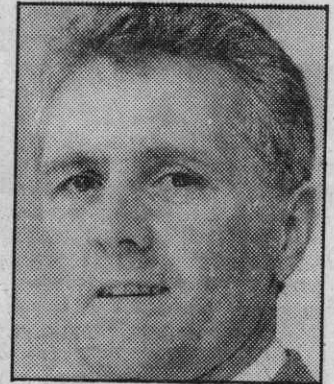
that was, the caller replied: "Let's just say we're talking Chernobyl."

The second call, last Thursday, alleged that fractures in the submarines had been obvious for years and the reason for the withdrawal of the submarines was that the MoD was afraid the emergency cooling system did not work.

The caller claimed that there was an incident at Faslane nearly two years ago when there was a near-meltdown. This referred to an incident on board the Polaris vessel Resolution when power to the main coolant pumps was said to have failed, followed by the failure of the back-up coolant systems.

At the time, the MoD described the incident as an electrical malfunction

Yesterday an MoD spokes-



John McFall: pressing for Government statement

man said: "The Royal Navy is proud of the safety record it has had over the past 30 years. To suggest we have been anywhere near a meltdown on any occasion is ridiculous." The spokesman refused to comment further.

MPs to press for extension of Clyde submarine safety

SC 25391

WEST of Scotland MPs will meet the armed forces minister, Archie Hamilton, in London today to press for an immediate extension of the safety scheme introduced in the Clyde last Christmas after the sinking of the fishing boat Antares by a Royal Navy submarine off Arran with the loss of four lives.

Under the scheme, which is operated by the Royal Navy and the Clyde Fishermen's Association, the navy keeps fishermen informed in advance of the movements of submarines in the Firth of Clyde fishing grounds and a special VHF radio link has been set up.

The Western Isles MP, Calum Macdonald, said yesterday: "I asked for the meeting after an incident just outside Stornoway when a submarine came dangerously close to some local boats and one of them had to take evasive action. Since then there has been another incident near Raasay off the Isle of Skye.

"Essentially what I will be pressing for is an extension of the Clyde scheme to cover the whole of the inshore fishing waters off the west coast.

"I hope it is significant that no incident has been reported in the Clyde since the scheme was introduced there.

Foulkes, the Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley MP who is a vice president of the Clyde Fishermen's Association, will also be taking part in the talks with the minister. He said: "We want an immediate assessment of the value of the Clyde scheme,



Archie Hamilton: Meeting West of Scotland MPs today

which could be done by talking to submarine commanders. It is our view that the answers the MOD would get would indicate that it has been a success and therefore should be extended to other areas immediately."

Labour's Scottish Affairs spokesman, Brian Wilson, said yesterday: "I think it is worth recalling that when we went to Archie Hamilton in the aftermath of the Antares tragedy he said it was quite impossible to introduce a