

Polaris safety comes under fire

Claims of nuclear risks at sea

By CAMERON SIMPSON

THE Ministry of Defence and politicians were accused yesterday of running the risk of a nuclear accident by pushing Polaris and other nuclear powered submarines beyond their normal limits.

A report has claimed the Ministry has placed operational requirements above the demands of safety.

It says fractures within the reactor coolant circuit of the boats are a serious fault which cannot easily be detected or repaired, and could be the cause of the next nuclear accident.

The report, Cracking Under Pressure: The Response to Defects in British Nuclear Submarines, is the work of Scottish CND and Faslane Peace Camp who have monitored, recorded, and analysed the movements of submarines on the Clyde over a two-year period.

Launching the 29-page report at a news conference in Glasgow yesterday, Mr Phil Jones, of the peace camp, said: "It is possible that an accident on these submarines could have the same consequences as Chernobyl."

The Rev. Adrian Rennie, Scottish CND press officer, said that possibly for the first time CND was not totally blaming the Ministry which was having to work with submarines past their sell-by date.

He said it was being pushed by politicians who were pursuing an out-of-date policy of keeping one Polaris at sea at all times. There was, he argued, no longer any strategic rationale to support this



John Ainslie and the Rev. Adrian Rennie launch their attack on the Ministry of Defence

practice which was endangering the lives of both submariners and the public.

"If these submarines were aircraft they would not be allowed to fly because of the safety problems with them. The politicians should call them home and decommission them," he said.

The report was being taken seriously, he said, by the National Ra-

diological Protection Board which is represented on the Nuclear Powered Warship Safety Committee. The board had also passed it on to the Ministry.

Mr John Ainslie, Scottish CND administrator, admitted they had a particular axe to grind, namely the scrapping of the nuclear deterrent. "However, a lot of our information is coming from sub-

mariners. They are concerned and are not being told the truth by the Navy."

The danger would continue to exist for the next two to three years until the new Trident submarines were added to the Navy's strength. However, the policy which called for such nuclear firepower was now redundant.

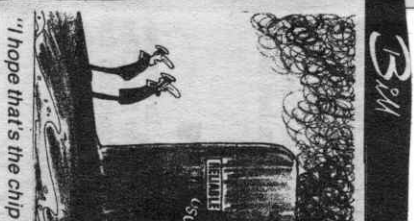
Last night, a spokesman for the

Ministry of defence dismissed the fears raised by the report.

He said: "From what I've heard there is nothing new in the noises the report is making. We would not send nuclear submarines to sea unless it was safe to do so."

"Safety is paramount and I don't think that the people who write these reports understand the issues."

Picture: JAMES GALLOWAY



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