



No protection for the public Questions that must be answered

Madam,

SO Exercise Short Sermon was a success eh? the Navy have proved that with 12 months of planning they can 'cope' with a nuclear accident at Faslane.

So long as before any submarine dares to catch fire and throw clouds of radioactive material into the atmosphere, there has been time to assemble all the monitoring and emergency planning folk from up and down the country, communications have been set up at the off-site centre at Rhu, and catering tents and even rows of portaloos have been erected. (You hate to think of these poor souls in a real emergency trying to fend off nuclear catastrophe whilst hopping about on one leg waiting for their turn in the loo!)

During last week's exercise 100 students were brought in to play the part of the press and be briefed on the situation as it developed.

Hardly realistic, as we all know the navy's reaction to anything is to clam up and hope it will go away, and if it doesn't, then only admit to what is publicly known already.

A case in point was the incident on HMS Turbulent a couple of weeks ago. The submarine returned to Devon port after the reactor leaked radioactive coolant and more than 130 sailors underwent emergency medical tests.

The Navy as ever said that 'there had been no leakage into the atmosphere, and no need to inform the public. I can't help feeling that if, God forbid, anything serious ever happened at Faslane and the Navy did decide that the public should be informed they might just find that the public had already headed off down the road by whatever means they could find.

Farcical exercises and an obsession with secrecy do not protect the public. Whilst nuclear physics cannot be unlearned, decommissioning the reactors and the weapons would certainly make us all much safer than the present state of affairs.

Yours etc., Jane Tallents, 26 John Street,

Questions that must be answered

Madam,

QUESTIONS outstanding, following last week's simulated nuclear disaster at Faslane, are: -

- 1. What was the outcome of the emergency?
- 2. Were the children's antidote iodine tablets given to them in time to save them? (In Devonport we understand these pills

are stocked in local schools, nurseries and health centres.)

● 3. Is the fleet of buses parked daily at our pier head car park really kept there all day ready to evacuate MOD personnel should an emergency arise and if so what about the rest of us?

● 4. We heard rumours that the crippled submarine was sunk at its berth in one case by naval gunfire! Surely a ridiculous

scenario, but in actual truth how was the damaged reactor contained?

● 5. Although every element of the news media was present covering the evacuation, only the Helensburgh Advertiser carried the story. Was a news blackout part of the exercise? If not, perhaps the MOD would stop treating our concerned residents as the proverbial mushrooms.

I HOPE you might manage to find space in your columns to publish the following:

Donations urgently needed

Madam,

Many of us watched in anguish during recent TV coverage showing the plight and suffering of children with learning disabilities in Bulgaria.

Helensburgh and District Branch of ENARI F are organising local collections of much needed items to alleviate some of the discomfort and pain in a practical way.

Jean Cottage at 102 East King Street, Helensburgh will be open from 10am-12noon on Saturday 6 December and again on Saturday 13 December where volunteers will be on hand to receive donations.

Urgently needed are - blankets/warm bedding, Helensburgh and District children's clothing (up to

Close Faslane - only safe thing to do

Madam,

DOES local Tourist Board chair Councillor Billy Petrie really think that the best way to attract more visitors to Argyll and Bute is to sink a leaking nuclear submarine in the Gareloch?

Does Argyll and Bute Council really think it is putting local people's interests first by endorsing this solution to a nuclear accident at the Clyde Naval Base, as shown in "Exercise Short Sermon" last week?

Local residents and the Council too, deserve better than this. They deserve better treatment than the husband of people from Gareloch-head who asked the driver to stop at the peace camp so that one of them could ask whether there had been a nuclear accident.

The driver was quite happy to do so; none of them had been told about "Exercise Short Sermon". Peace campers were able to tell them that it was - this time - only an exercise. This incident merely underlines the folly of using Argyll and Bute Council's money to carry on an expensive court case and eviction of the peace camp.

Local people know that we are motivated by a desire to find out and tell the truth about the hazards of the nuclear base on their doorstep.

"Short Sermon" shows that they are not well served by their local authority which seems happy to go along with anything the Navy wants to do, unlike the Council it replaced in April 1996.

There is only one safe solution to the potential hazards of nuclear submarines on the Clyde and that is to close down the naval base and dismantle its nuclear weapons and nuclear-powered submarines.

Yours etc., Pamela Smith, Faslane Peace Camp, Shandon, Helensburgh.

Send your letters to: The editor, Helensburgh Advertiser, 15 Colquhoun Square, Helensburgh.