

(SUPPORT)

(CIVIL DEFENCE)

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## Civil defence rules put Government and c

EDINBURGH will soon become a "nuclear free zone" as the city's new Labour administration puts into effect more of its election manifesto commitments.

The decision will result in the capital joining the list of around 25 other Scottish local authorities which have declared their areas "nuclear free" in protest at the Government's nuclear weapons policy.

Edinburgh's stand, which will be officially confirmed at a meeting of the district council next week, comes at a time when the Government's policy is likely to become the subject of increasing conflict between Ministers and Scotland's recently-strengthened Labour councils.

Plans are in hand for the setting up of a Scottish Association of Nuclear Free Zones which will co-ordinate the council's anti-nuclear campaign and try to persuade others to declare their outright opposition to the placing of nuclear weapons in their areas.

There are also signs of renewed controversy over the new civil defence regulations which came into effect at the end of last year. The Labour Party has advised council Labour groups throughout Britain of legal advice which could result in councils delaying implementation of the new rules which lay down directives on the training of staff, exercises and the provision of emergency centres.

Edinburgh's declaration as a nuclear free zone is in accordance with a policy statement modelled on the manifesto and drawn up after Labour's May election victory. "The whole city will become both a nuclear free zone and apartheid free zone," it declares.

Councillor James Burnett, secretary of the Labour group and a committed anti-nuclear campaigner, says: "It's my view that the creation of a nuclear free zone in Edinburgh is much more important than taking on board emergency planning officers or participating in tin-pot exercises."

After the policy statement is approved the nuclear free proposal and other manifesto commitments will be investigated by officials for detailed imple-



Bill Walker: "zone will have no impact"



Ian Leitch: desire to ban weapons

**DAVID SCOTT, Our Local Government Correspondent, looks behind the Labour group's decision to declare Edinburgh a nuclear free zone**

# New recruit for the 'nuclear free' club

mentation. A timetable will be prepared for bringing the anti-nuclear policies into effect and group decisions will be taken on how strong a stand it should take on issues like the civil defence regulations. "Our intention will be to participate fully in any national organisation committed to a nuclear free policy," says Councillor Burnett.

Labour councils in Scotland have been active in resisting the Government's nuclear weapons policy over the last two years. They were among about 135 councils throughout Britain which responded to a call by Manchester City Council for the setting up of a national steering committee to spearhead the nuclear free zones campaign.

The Manchester resolution which led to the creation of the steering committee called on the Government to "refrain from the manufacture or positioning of any nuclear weapons of any kind within the boundaries of our city."

It appealed to other councils throughout Britain to make similar statements and sug-

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gested they could "lay the groundwork for the creation and development of a nuclear free zone in Europe."

The Scottish anti-nuclear authorities are now in the process of setting up their own nuclear free zones association which will operate within the national framework. At a meeting in Dundee Scottish local authority representatives agreed in principle to the association. Further discussions on the subject are likely to be held with the national steering committee soon.

Though now Conservative controlled, Lothian Regional Council is still represented on the national steering committee. With the support of the SDP-Liberal Alliance, Labour succeeded in committing Lothian to adhere to its policy of supporting nuclear free zones so its official position will not be in conflict to that adopted by Edinburgh District. Council officials point out, however, that the region has not actually declared itself a "nuclear free zone."

Councillors active in the anti-nuclear campaign confess

that such declarations can be of only limited value and that they have no powers to remove existing nuclear bases or prevent new ones from being installed.

According to the Scottish Conservatives' defence spokesman, Mr Bill Walker, MP for North Tayside, declaring any area nuclear free is "about as sensible and effective as declaring one's home to be burglar free."

Mr Walker said recently that in the same way as a burglar free zone would have no impact on any burglar, a nuclear free zone would have no impact on any possible combatant in a conflict between East and West.

But Councillor Ian Leitch, planning convener of Dumbar-ton District and a Scottish member of the national steering committee, emphasises that the zone concept is of considerable importance in highlighting a council's desire to ban nuclear weapons in their area.

"Clearly, for most authorities it can only be a statement of their desire and intent,"

## Councils on collision course



says Mr Leitch, who is at the forefront of his district council's current fight against the Ministry of Defence's plans to expand the Clyde submarine base to take the Trident fleet.

Accepting that the "nuclear free" declaration can have little or no practical effect in stopping the proposals he says the zone concept nevertheless clearly shows the council's objective.

Dumbarton is planning exhibitions to illustrate the thinking behind the zone policy at a time when local controversy is likely to grow over the Ministry of Defence's latest plans.

The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has adopted a low profile in the nuclear debate having rejected a proposal that it should initiate joint action. The convention's view is that the matter should be left to authorities participating in the steering committee.

COSLA, however, has taken a harder line on the question of civil defence policy. Its protective services committee in recent years has been sceptical

about the value of civil defence in a nuclear war context and it strongly voiced its opposition to the new regulations when these were published last summer.

It is the actual implementation of these new rules that could quickly become the subject of a new disagreement between councils and the Scottish Office.

Mr George Younger, the Scottish Secretary, has issued a questionnaire which requires regional and islands councils to provide information about how the regulations are being implemented.

Mr Younger wants to know, for example, whether councils are providing emergency centres that are capable of controlling and co-ordinating action in the event of a hostile attack, whether councils are undertaking the required training of local authority staff and whether they have taken necessary action to involve voluntary organisations.

According to the Labour Party's advice, based on legal

opinion, councils cannot reasonably be expected to implement the regulations in the absence of detailed planning assumptions on the likely form of attack.

Councillor Leitch says: "On the basis of information currently available from the Government, authorities are unable to implement the regulations. The opinion of counsel is quite clear: if you are to plan effectively in terms of the regulations passed by Parliament it is essential you are given the planning assumptions — the assumed attack patterns.

Some guidance may soon be on its way. The Scottish Office say guidance on planning assumptions will be issued shortly. "It is up to each authority to make in the light of this guidance its own assessment of the possible variety of scenarios," a spokesman said.

Meantime, there is a view among some councillors that the law should be defied. Councillor Neil Lindsay, a member of the Labour group in Lothian and a Scottish representative on the national steering committee, declares: "Personally I believe we should refuse to implement the regulations and accept the fact that legal sanctions would be taken against us. People should be made aware of the absolute nonsense of the regulations. It's an attempt to gull people into believing somehow that nuclear war is survivable."

In the Edinburgh District Council Labour group, Councillor Burnett says: "Matters like war games and the recruitment of emergency planning officers will be well down our list of priorities. When it comes to legislation or legal responsibilities and the question of whether we go outwith the law it is a matter for the Labour group to decide. Personally speaking I would have no qualms about ignoring the regulations."

Mr Burnett accepts that the creation of a nuclear free zone in itself will not bring direct benefits. "But it will make the position of the council clear and will show other councils up and down the country that we are determined to do everything within our power to oppose nuclear weapons."