

SCRUTINY

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RING AROUND THE BASES

New byelaws to hinder peace camps and protesters at controversial nuclear bases round Britain are being created by the Ministry of Defence. The Ministry has just admitted that 19 CND or peace camp sites are already or will soon be subject to special new military laws

QUESTIONED by Liberal MP Archy Kirkwood, Defence Under-Secretary John Lee said last week that the Ministry is planning new regulations for 12 military sites, most of them American bases, in addition to seven bases already covered. The regulations — ordered under the Military Lands Act of 1892 — will make it an offence for anyone to 'distribute or display any handbill, leaflet, sign [or] notice, or affix the same to either side of the perimeter fences.'

At these bases peaceful activity which does not involve trespass or force, such as displaying slogans or weaving doves into the wire, may incur immediate arrest without a warrant, and a fine of up to £100. Anyone refusing to pay the fine can be jailed for up to two weeks.

It will also be an offence to 'enter or leave the Protected Area except by way of an authorised entrance or exit', to attempt to enter at all without permission, or to 'defence any sign, wall, fence [or] pavement' in the Area. The regulations allow any military officer or NCO in uniform to make summary arrests of protestors, a task normally left to British civilian or Ministry of Defence police.

The Military Lands Acts allow the Defence Secretary to make such byelaws without reference to Parliament. Until 1984, the Acts were used almost exclusively to restrict access to firing and bombing ranges, usually on grounds of public safety. About 90 sites are currently covered by the Act.

But the byelaws have recently been extended to cover seven major US or nuclear bases. These are the cruise missile bases at Greenham Common and Molesworth, and Alconbury (which provides most of

the support facilities for Molesworth). Since the start of 1986, new laws have come into effect covering the Polaris missile bases and stores at Faslane and Coulport, the US National Security Agency monitoring centre at Menwith Hill near Harrogate, and Lakenheath and Mildenhall in Suffolk, both major US Air Force bases.

The new regulations proposed by the Ministry also affect the Holy Loch, on the Clyde. Some or all the waters of the Holy Loch will be prohibited to public access under the regulations. Local residents fear that use of the sheltered and attractive loch, a popular sailing and sports centre despite the presence of US

Poseidon submarines and their mother ship, will now be restricted to American use only.

Eleven other bases will be covered by Military Lands Acts regulations: Rosyth dockyard; Upper Heyford (F-III bombers); St Mawgan (US nuclear store); Brawdy; Burtonwood and Caerwent (both US arms dumps); Waddington and Boscombe Down; the nuclear weapons research centre at Aldermaston; and the bomb-making Royal Ordnance Factories at Burghfield and Llanishen, Cardiff.

Challenged about the laws banning the display of posters and placards around a prohibited area, the Ministry of Defence has claimed in letters to objectors that 'no obstruction . . . should occur which may obscure sight of unlawful acts which are being or are about to be committed'. The Ministry also claimed that it 'fully recognised that in our democratic society it is important to defend the right of people to express an opinion and our Government have been at pains to reinforce this right on many occasions'. But no evidence was offered to support this astonishing claim. ●

Spy shuffle

CHANGES at the top of British intelligence have led to the appointment of a career MI6

official as Cabinet Office Intelligence Co-ordinator for the first time. Four of Britain's five top spy jobs have now changed hands in less than a year.

The Cabinet Office has admitted to the NS that Sir Colin Figures has been appointed as one of the office's four Deputy Secretaries, the rank customarily held by the Intelligence Co-ordinator. Until last year, Figures was the Chief of the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS, or 'MI6').

Figures replaces ex-diplomat Sir Anthony Duff, who was despatched from the Cabinet Office to polish up MI5's badly dented image. Low morale in the security service follows the Bettany spy trial, and public revelations about its actions in spying on CND and then passing on information which was used by the Conservative Party for party political propaganda.

Figures, 60 last year, was knighted in 1983 after running MI6 for a year, and after a lifetime spent working for the secret service in Jordan, Germany, Austria and Poland. He came to public notice during the celebrations which surrounded the Falklands War. Both he and the new MI5 director, Duff, are said to be held in particular favour by the Prime Minister.

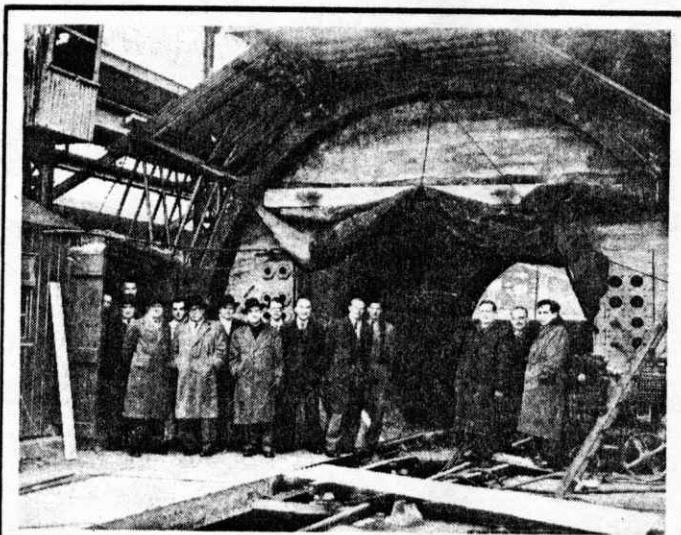
The Cabinet Office Intelligence Co-ordinator is responsible for controlling the intelligence and security service budget, now around £1 billion a year. Once the Prime Minister and civil service chiefs have agreed the budget, it is broken up into 'line items', which can then be hidden in other government departments' budgets.

Most of the money to pay for British intelligence is concealed from accountability to MPs inside different sections of the Defence Ministry budget. The Secret Vote, which MPs are supposed to think is the intelligence services budget, is in fact merely their 'slush fund' — the amount of unaudited cash they receive. The Secret Vote for 1986/87, included in last month's Budget, was £92 million.

Since the debacle over the failure to predict the Argentine invasion of the Falkland Islands, the Co-ordinator has also controlled the Joint Intelligence Committee, which collates and assesses all incoming intelligence.

The government has also appointed a new Director General of Intelligence to take command of the Defence Intelligence Staff at the Ministry of Defence. He is retired Lieutenant General Derek Boorman, described by defence sources as an official 'smoothie'. At SIS itself, the new Chief is Chris Curwen, another career intelligence officer.

The only top British intelligence job which has not changed hands in the last year is that of the director of GCHQ Cheltenham, Sir Peter Marychurch. But Marychurch continues to be the focus of the government's attempt to ban trade unions at the electronic intelligence centre. ●



The secret purpose of 20 tunnel gates like this, hidden inside the London Underground system, has been revealed in confidential reports obtained by the *New Statesman*. The people shown above are London Transport engineers, admiring a prototype automatic floodgate. The confidential reports, dated 1969, show that from as early as 1950 the Home Office anticipated that London would be destroyed in any attack on Britain. At first, the government expected that Nagasaki-type atomic bombs would be used, obliterating central London for a distance of 3500 feet from the River Thames. The automatic gates were installed to hold back floodwater from the devastated area so that the rest of the system could still be used.

As late as 1968, the system was extended at government expense by building two gates into the new Victoria Line. Three years ago, London Transport reluctantly admitted to its then paymasters, the GLC, that it was still receiving a secret Ministry of Transport subsidy to keep the system going. But because government policy on civil defence was (and still is) to tell Londoners to stay put in their homes, the existence of gates like this one has been kept secret. They are specifically covered by D Notice no 7, which publication of this article contravenes, asking the press to reveal nothing to Londoners about 'underground floodgates that are not in public view on the London Underground Railways'. The gates were also built so far up the tunnels that they cannot be seen from any station platform, and are not visible from trains