

'SUICIDE PILL' IN N-ATTACK

D. TEL. 14/12/83

By COLIN RANDALL

A FAMILY doctor has called a public meeting to discover whether villagers would like him to give out "suicide pills" in the event of a nuclear attack.

Dr Richard Lawson, 37, said yesterday at his surgery in Congresbury, near Bristol, that he would be willing to stockpile cyanide tablets so that patients could opt for a dignified death to "deliver them from their misery."

Dr Lawson, a member of the ND, the Medical Campaign against Nuclear Weapons, for peace, Friends of the Earth, and the Ecology party, believes that the introduction of Cruise and Pershing-2 missiles has made the world a more dangerous place.

He has called a parish meeting in Congresbury, which has a population of about 4,000 people, next Wednesday to discuss three options.

Dr Lawson said that villagers could choose to "do nothing," either from a sense of hopelessness or in protest, because they accepted the government's case for deterrence; could try to make the village completely self-sufficient for at least a year; or could opt for euthanasia.

"People will require euthanasia, especially if we have a nuclear attack," he said.

Dr Lawson, who has five-year-old twins, said that several patients had told him that they would stab or strangle their children rather than subject them to suffering or slow death in the aftermath of nuclear attack.

A British Medical Association spokesman said that although most doctors felt that it was not part of their job to help people commit suicide, Dr Lawson seemed to have created or identified a "genuine ethical lemma."

CIVIL DEFENCE

SUICIDE VOTE

At a public meeting in Congresbury, near Bristol, last night, the village GP, Dr Richard Lawson, proposed that residents should have access to lethal doses of morphine after a nuclear war. His motion was passed by a 62-16 vote.

Emergency services 'could not cope with nuclear accident'

Gov. 14/12/83 (4/12/83)

By John Ardill, Labour Correspondent

Britain's emergency services are neither trained nor equipped to deal with a major accident at a nuclear installation or during the transport of nuclear waste, trade union leaders claimed yesterday.

The Fire Brigades Union general secretary, Mr Ken Cameron, and the National Union of Public Employees general secretary, Mr Rodney Bickerstaffe, revealed that their unions were considering advising fire and ambulancemen not to turn out to such an incident because of the dangers involved.

They were speaking at a press conference called by a consortium of unions and local authorities opposed to the building of a pressurised water reactor (PWR) at Sizewell in Suffolk.

The risks of an incident like the melt-down of the Three Mile Island PWR station in the United States, and the dangers involved, will form part of the consortium's evidence which will be presented to the Sizewell inquiry by the former Nupe general secretary, Mr Alan Fisher.

Other ambulancemen's leaders yesterday scorned the idea of emergency workers not responding to such an incident when other trade unionists would be in danger.



Mr Ken Cameron (left) and Mr Rodney Bickerstaffe — "risk to emergency service personnel."

The chairman of the consortium, Nupe national officer, Mr Roger Poole, said that it was the instinct to emergency workers to turn out when required.

But the unions wanted to open a debate among members and the public of the risks involved, he said. It was not a question of securing adequate equipment for the emergency services, because such equipment did not exist.

The only advice the Department of Health gave for dealing with patients exposed to radioactive contamination was to cover them with a plastic sheet, he said. "Needless to say, ambulances are not equipped with plastic sheets."

Mr Cameron said that in some shire counties where

spending cuts were being heavily applied — the very areas in which there were nuclear installations — firemen now lacked even breathing equipment.

There was no point in putting fire or ambulancemen in a situation where they were going to die a horrible death from radiation, he said.

Mr Poole said that research carried out for the consortium by the Political Ecology Research Group in Oxford showed that it could be necessary to evacuate Ipswich if there were a major melt-down incident at Sizewell.

The emergency services and local authorities could not cope with such an evacuation. "The result would be massive panic," he said.