

CIVIL DEFENCE — PROTECT OR PROTEST?

The Carmarthen nuclear bunker occupation is only one episode in the battle over the government's 1983 civil defence regulations, under which councils are expected to take measures to deal with the effects of nuclear attack.

Are such measures effective? Can they simply be an extension of the normal planning for peacetime disasters such as floods and train crashes? How do they connect to the government's secret war plans? How can they be funded at a time of massive cuts in public services?

And how can effective plans be drawn up, in the absence of information about the likely scale and pattern of nuclear attack on this country?

Sanity brought together four people who are involved in very different ways in civil defence planning, to discuss these questions. **Eric Alley** is Civil Defence Adviser at the Home Office. **Mick Chick** is vice-chair of the Association of Civil Defence and Emergency Planning Officers.

Hilary Richmond is a spokesperson for the Alliance group on Cambridge City Council and a member of the national steering committee of NFZ councils. **Simon**

Turney is chair of the Fire and Public Services Committee on the GLC and a member of the national steering committee of NFZ councils. The discussion is chaired by **Fred Barker**, who works on NFZs and civil defence at British CND's national office.

Fred Barker Public confidence in civil defence is at a very low ebb. Do you think it can be regained?

Mick Chick I would question whether or not confidence in civil defence has been lost. I'm not certain that the general public really understands what the service of civil defence is. Civil defence has unfortunately been drawn into the nuclear debate, which to my mind is a separate issue. Civil defence is really all about mitigating the effects of any disaster. What creates that disaster is not really for emergency planners to comment on. We produce plans which mitigate the effects of disaster, and this is really the message that the public has failed to get about civil defence.

Hilary Richmond If only it were true that civil defence was for protecting people against ordinary emergencies. The 1948 Civil Defence Act itself says something very different. It defines civil defence as measures to deal with hostile attack. The bulk of guidance from the Home Office is actually about measures intended to cope with nuclear attack. To say that civil defence is about all disasters seems to me to get away from what is really happening in civil defence. It also suggests that local authorities who refuse to take part in civil defence planning don't have a set of plans for dealing with peacetime disasters, which, of course, they do. If people have a negative view of civil defence, it is because when they find out that civil defence is only about hostile attack, and in real terms only about nuclear attack, they become disconcerted.

Eric Alley I don't think public confidence in civil defence has been undermined. The real problem is that the public have not been allowed to look at the situation because of all the rhetoric and polemic. I think we should see civil defence for what it is — a commonsense, humanitarian method to mitigate suffering in the event of any conflict or disaster. Within the spectrum of disaster you've got mundane problems on one hand such as flooding and at the far end the possibility of war or nuclear war.

Simon Turney It would be hard to avoid the conclusion that government policy lacks credibility, both from its critics, like ourselves, and internally among the emergency planning officers. This year's Association of Civil Defence Officers' conference was devoted in part to a public presentation of Civil Defence and how the

EPOs could make this more effective. Also in the 1984 study up at Easingwold [the County Emergency Planning Officers study] a substantial section of the five-day study was devoted to the presentation of civil defence to the public. The recommendations say that anti-civil defence propaganda aimed at national audiences must be countered by prompt and positive responses stressing the humanitarian aim, which Mr Alley has just tried to do. Then there are other recommendations which are absolutely outrageous, stunning and sinister. Because of the impact of TV on the public, the Home Office should 'consider arrangements of contrived situations in popular programmes, where well known personalities should be encouraged to present information through television public service fillers'. I believe it to be entirely sinister that the enthusiastic protagonists of civil defence should actively be encouraging the Home Office to try and propagandise government policy or their own views through subtle alterations of programmes like 'The Archers', 'Eastenders' or 'Coronation Street'.

Another key recommendation is that EPOs have got to be trained in the



AH, BUT IS IT A 'NATURAL
DISASTER' OR A 'HOSTILE
ATTACK'?

accommodate everyone). Surely the dissemination of information can be achieved through other means?

I respect Wilmette's views. I sympathise with the frustration she perhaps felt at being able to attend only a small part of the weekend, and I understand her desire to communicate her concerns to all the 800 women collected together in Manchester. However, I feel it is unfair to dismiss the event, when perhaps she was unaware what was achieved throughout the weekend.

We are collecting together reports, photographs, addresses etc and making enquiries with different publishers in the hope of publishing a book drawing together all the information we can. We'd be delighted to receive contributions from Wilmette or from any other women, their thoughts, ideas, feelings, criticisms etc of the weekend, together with contact addresses for groups. (If you require a reply, enclose an sae please!) Contributions should be forwarded to: Women's Weekend for Peace and Justice, c/o 61 Bloom Street, Manchester M1 3LY.

Could I take this opportunity to thank all the women who helped to make the weekend happen, particularly the Manchester women for all the hard work which they put in.
Annette
Blackpool, Lancs

Nicaragua – learning about war

I have just returned from Nicaragua, where, in a whole month, I heard no-one talk of nuclear war. In a sense, then, this has nothing to do with *Sanity*. Yet two points strike me.

In the last years of their revolution, which ended in 1979, that small country lost 50,000 people, and since then 8,000 have died in a senseless defensive war initiated, financed and encouraged by the United States, which in addition have imposed a total economic blockade on Nicaragua.

Without the war and the blockade, it would have been a long struggle for a new nation to establish itself, to build a new economy, a new democracy, new systems of health, housing and education, to overcome the desperately poor and criminally under-

developed conditions in which the majority of the population found itself. But add to that the fact that a large proportion of their adult and young-adult population, and a large proportion of their inadequate national income is wasted on the war, and it is no wonder that the first and most important clause in their new draft constitution refers to the need to eradicate all exploitation of man by man.

It is the first time in my life that I have been thus confronted with the wastefulness and insanity of war.

The second point is that the justification for this aggression, broadcast repeatedly by transnational media, is based on a number of carefully contrived untruths, two significant ones of which are that their government is not a 'real', democratically elected government, and that human rights are being violated. And it is not only myself, as a single critical eye, but internationally acceptable sources including Amnesty International which have discovered the contrary.

We can only speculate – until it is too late – on the effects of nuclear war. The Nicaraguans have no spare capacity for speculation. They know at first hand the trauma of war, as well as the fact that the damage is unnecessary, justified by lies, in the interests of supra-national powers whose motives are economic and hegemonic rather than humane. But I suspect that the difference is one of degree rather than kind. We have much to learn from the Nicaraguans' optimism, creativity, hard work and honesty. Perhaps this is how David came to grips with Goliath.

Rhys Evans
Leicester

Nuclear Power

I will begin by assuring Rob Edwards that I read many of the transcripts of CND's evidence at Sizewell. Indeed, it was this that showed me how much human effort as well as CND cash was being diverted into that somewhat sterile exercise. The main burden of the submissions that struck me was that the Thatcher government had secretly sent British reactor-grade plutonium to the USA. This

seemed to me quite believable, whether the USA wanted it for isotope separation and use in bombs, in the absence of a US processing plant for civil reactors, or whether they wanted to fuel a fast reactor without using up some of their own military grade plutonium.

A paper by Barnham *et al* in *Nature* (317, 213) makes the same point more quantitatively, more succinctly, and without cost to CND.

But nowhere does Rob Edwards show how stopping Sizewell would make this more difficult. I still would find time to read Rob Edwards's new pamphlet however in the hope that his energetic sincerity has developed some new ideas.

Like David Sumner I read the interview with Rosalie Bertell, and have bought and read her book. I do not expect her to have bought mine (*Power Production: What are the Risks?*) – it costs more than hers. She writes with force and sincerity, and I found her report of the callous and careless exposure of people in Utah to fall-out from bomb tests entirely credible. But she seems to have got her information on nuclear technology from a complete ignoramus. Her book therefore contains a great many misunderstandings and errors, including some real howlers.

For example (page 270 line 8) she says: (The high level waste, for example from Sellafield) 'is still capable of fissioning and must be surrounded by sufficient water to absorb the neutrons and prevent a chain reaction from starting spontaneously'.

This is complete nonsense, for three separately adequate reasons.

- 1 Practically all of the plutonium and uranium have been removed from the wastes – that is what the processing is done for – and the remaining traces of fissionable material are thousands of times too dilute to reach a critical mass whatever the quantity.
- 2 The reason for removing the fuel from a reactor at all when much plutonium and uranium-235 remain unburnt is that many of the fission products absorb neutrons far better than does water and use up all the spare neutrons available in the reactor.

- 3 Water surrounding the wastes would slow down and reflect enough neutrons to do more than balance the loss of the neutrons absorbed. This is its function as a moderator in a PWR; without the water the reactor would never even start.

When she is so inaccurate on text-book data, how can she be trusted in the wilder assertions she makes about the effects of effluents from nuclear power stations?

Mr Macwhirter thinks that I underestimate the deadliness of plutonium. I do not; it is dangerous stuff. But it is fifteen times less radioactive than radium and over a hundred times less efficiently absorbed from the gut when swallowed. The top metre of the soil of Britain, through which all of our drinking water must percolate before it reaches us, contains about 800 kg of radium, but the amount entering our drinking water is unlikely to kill more than one of us a year, although the amount in the soil is as dangerous to ingest as a thousand tonnes of plutonium – though I would not add any plutonium to the radium already there. This does not mean that high-level wastes can be fooled with. My choice would be to make them into a glass or insoluble rock in corrosion-resistant canisters, and when these have cooled off a bit to bury them in the side of a streamless hill near the sea, so that if ground water does eventually dissolve the wastes away they will move slowly underground into the sea, which already contains a thousand million curies of natural alpha emitters.

But even if this is not perfect, what relevance has it to CND? Is anyone supposing that it is comparable in danger to a nuclear war?

Why have there been no letters concerning my positive proposal that CND should campaign for the diversion of research workers at Aldermaston into finding out how best to destroy plutonium instead of how best to destroy people? This could make a useful plank of policy for the Labour Party, which has so far shown no sign of any practical consideration of how to handle the bombs which they so creditably intend to ban.
(Professor) John Fremlin
Edgbaston, Birmingham

presentation of Civil Defence policy to the public by using selling, promotion and psychological techniques rather than simple lecturing.

There is also an internal split about the 'all hazards' approach. One strand of opinion within the civil defence industry wants to break the seamless robe between floods at one end and the nuclear holocaust at the other. Indeed, at the Scottish seminar [the annual conference of the Association of Civil Defence and Emergency Planning Officers, June 1985] the President of the Association of Civil Defence, Sir Leslie Mavor, was firm in his view that peacetime disasters should be totally separated from wartime planning, and that the job of civil defence officers was to plan for war rather than any marginal or incidental preoccupation with floods and other disasters, be they industrial or natural.

Fred Barker Are there then, serious differences within the civil defence community about the legitimacy of the 'all hazards' approach?

Mick Chick Not at all. Sir Leslie Mavor made his address on behalf of Sir Leslie Mavor and not on behalf of the Association. We don't tie the hands of our President. The view of the Association is the 'all hazards' approach, and has always been so.

Eric Alley I think that to say that it is sinister to ask for some presentation of civil defence in one or two programmes on TV is really stretching things a bit too far. Heavens above, CND gets goodness knows how much input into all sorts of popular programmes on TV. The only piece of civil defence that ever came up was in 'The Archers' recently when Jill Archer became a WRVS organiser. We had TV fillers prior to 1968 and good ones went out on television. No one complained very much about them then, and I wish now we could find the money and the wherewithal to bring our TV fillers back and to get more to the public on what we are doing. This is where we are falling down.

Hilary Richmond I'm concerned that the 'all hazards' approach has sought to mislead people about what can be done. I have met a number of civil defence volunteers in Cambridgeshire who first of all thought that they were engaged in a scheme as volunteers to protect their communities from emergencies of all sorts. In fact, they said to me: 'In the event of a nuclear attack we won't be here anyway. I'm here to help out if there is a peacetime disaster.' However, when I've spoken to our own senior council officers they have made it plain that it would be



MELANIE FRIEND

ERIC ALLEY: 'I think we should see civil defence for what it is – a commonsense, humanitarian method to mitigate suffering in the event of any conflict or disaster.'

almost inconceivable to find a situation in which a volunteer network of the 'all hazards' type would be of any use at all. For peacetime disasters, the emergency services would be on hand in as short a time as it would take to get any volunteer network off the ground, and in any event the emergency services and the local authorities tend to deal with major voluntary organisations such as the Red Cross.

If an informal volunteer network *could* have a role in peacetime emergency planning, this needs to be developed within communities themselves as part of overall community development, in which local needs and resources are identified and met by local people in ways appropriate to that community. This is very different from the centralised models suggested by the Regulations and various EPOs, in which wartime and peacetime duties are hopelessly mixed up, and which some Local Authorities are trying to implement, with training concentrating on post-nuclear-attack scenarios.

Mick Chick I cannot accept that training people within the community to assist in the event of disaster is a waste of time, and I cannot accept that it is abnormal to have a situation whereby the emergency services cannot sort it out. You have only to go back a couple of years and look at the problems caused by snow and rain. There are people in the community who, if they have had a limited amount of training, can assist. And all we are saying is, within the community in the event of disaster, there is always a willingness to help somebody else. What we are asking is for them to come forward and discuss with us what they can effectively do for the community so that effort is not wasted.



"...AND THIS ONE IS FOR REMOVING RADIOACTIVE SCHRAPNEL!..."

Simon Turney The best answer to Mick is from within the EPOs' own deliberations. They themselves have recognised that there is a need to 'assess the competition for volunteers and take steps to beat it, as the volunteer in society is a dying breed.' They want the Home Office to set allowances at a standard rate and a training bounty - £5 a head was the figure considered. The Home Office sat on that pretty sharply.

Another important point about the so-called 'all hazards' approach is a serious conflict in the types of plans needed for different types of emergency. For peacetime disasters major accidents and conventional war, what you're really after is the concentration of resources, of staff, equipment and machinery, to localise the particular crisis. But the key difference when you move towards or over the nuclear threshold is that *dispersal* has to be the order of the day, in order to preserve resources for the longer term - that's another quote from the Home Office. This is recognised in the Consolidated Guidance for Local Authorities, which refers to the additional and conflicting burden between conventional and nuclear war. Until we know precisely what the government has in mind for the local autho-



MELANIE FRIEND

HILARY RICHMOND: 'the bulk of guidance from the Home Office is actually about measures intended to cope with nuclear attack.'

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rities to do, the 1983 Regulations forced on us are frankly not worth the paper they are written on. They are patently unenforceable.

Eric Alley If anybody looks at the 1983 Regulations in comparison with the previous set of regulations – and in over 30 years in this job I've seen about five sets of regulations – they vary only slightly and only in accordance with the current strategic concepts as set out through intelligence sources. That's the only reason why new regulations were produced, except in one respect. For some reason, instead of having regulations that were always put into practice by local authorities by common consent, we had to introduce regulations which make sure that plans were tested and validated. We have always tested and validated plans in the past, and for some reason or other, it was decided by the local authorities that plans weren't going to be tested and validated and they would be stuck on the shelf to gather dust. Well, that's no way to do any sort of planning at all. Unfortunately, the regulations had to come out redrafted to say that they were going to have to be tested and validated, through exercises, studies and seminars and so on, to make sure that they were reasonably workable. That was basically the reason for the 1983 Regulations.

Simon Turney I disagree on strategic grounds with Eric Alley. The 1983 Civil Defence Regulations have their origins further away than any updating to make them workable. Two key impulses behind both the 1980 review and the new Regulations were, in fact, first the NATO decision on European theatre modernisation and, secondly, the invasion of Afghanistan. Those were the two key elements in strategic thinking at SHAPE [Supreme HQ Allied Powers Europe] and NATO. As a result, Lord Elton and Leon Brittan stated that civil defence had to be seen as an outpost of national defence policy. Nuclear-free-zone local authorities were then bound to be drawn into conflict with central government, because the cabinet had decided that there had to be a local or regional manifestation of defence policy by putting more clout behind civil defence.

Eric Alley I agree with that. A change in strategic policy, a change in intelligence assessment, brought about a change in civil defence organisation and civil defence establishment. This has happened throughout the whole time since the 1948 Act came into being.

Simon Turney A more fundamental

point is that the discussion about the 'all hazards' approach is largely irrelevant against the general background of government policy from 1920s onwards. Civil defence then and from the 1948 Act onwards has very little to do with the protection of communities or humanitarian objectives. The prime aim of civil defence is the preservation of the machinery of government, and any humanitarian effects are incidental to that particular strategic objective.

Mick Chick If you go back to what happened between 1968 and 1972, when civil defence planning was on the so-called 'care and maintenance' basis – all that that really allowed was for the protection of the machine. But once you go beyond that, the plans that are laid at local level and are really governed by local politicians, should be to ensure that what help can be offered to the public, is offered.

Simon Turney Yes, but that has been overtaken by the recent disclosures of the contents of the Emergency Powers legislation, to be put through Parliament if war was imminent. The new emergency legislation shows that the preservation of the State and its machinery is far more important in the eyes of those responsible for planning than the synthetic stuff offered to the local authorities. It is all to do with the centralised or regional system of population control in terms of move-

ment, labour and services, rather than any humanitarian effort to try and marginalise the impact of nuclear war on this country.

Eric Alley We had population control, control of movement of services, control of systems, control of resources, in the last war. It had to be done for the purposes of, in fact, looking after the people. That's what, in fact, it all boiled down to. You've got, for any form of hostilities, to have some form of civil defence organisation, and civil defence planning. Up to 1968 we were heading in the right direction. In 1968, Mick rightly points out, everything was reduced to just planning for maintenance of government. Between 1968 and 1972 all that was left was the warning monitoring organisation, the plans for the organisation of government at local level and central level, and all the central government plans, and so on. If that wasn't organisation for maintenance of central government by government, then I don't know what was.

Fred Barker The new emergency legislation has been drafted to accommodate a secret agreement between the US and Britain, called US-UK lines of communication. This has substantial resource implications in a time of war. For example, it allows for thirty major hospitals to be taken over by the US military. But emergency planners who are working

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MELANIE FRIEND

at a local level had not been told of these plans!

Eric Alley You tell me that these arrangements have been made and these bills have been drafted. Maybe they have, maybe they haven't. But as far as I can see, whatever arrangements have been made it doesn't affect the planning that we are doing, and the planning that we have to do. Frankly all this nonsense about taking over hospitals and what have you – I don't think casualties in the European theatre will actually get back to this country. They will be hospitalised on the mainland of Europe.

Simon Turney I have the advantage over Eric and Mick in that I have actually seen the London Regional Health Authority's draft war plan. This does acknowledge the dilemma: with all the resources of the health service in terms of hospital beds, drugs, stock-piled equipment and so on, there is no certainty of medical provision for the injured civilian post-strike, because whatever health service exists post-attack will be taken over by the pressing military needs to helicopter wounded soldiers out of Europe into NHS hospitals.

Hilary Richmond I think another thing that concerns local authorities is that the 1983 Regulations have considerable implications in terms of money and staff power spent on fulfilling them, at a time when other services of local authorities simply are not adequately resourced. It is extremely offensive to be told that we have to make civil defence plans for rehousing the homeless when we cannot actually house the homeless in peacetime. So you may say you don't want to discuss the political point, but it is not just a political point to us – it is a reality that we have to face. The safety, the housing, the education, and all the other services that we provide to people now have priority over anything to do with civil defence and certainly over the kind of civil defence regulations we have here.

Mick Chick But that is not a fair argument, if you start looking at things in terms of pound notes. If the local authority did nothing as far as civil defence planning was concerned but met what you would consider to be its rightful duty towards emergency planning, how many more pound notes would you have to build more council houses, to provide more social workers, to provide more teachers? You know it would be a drop in the ocean.

Hilary Richmond I'm saying that there aren't enough pound notes in the



"RE-HOUSED!" BUT I'VE NEVER
HAD A HOUSE!!

kitty to finance the services anyway, but to expect us to drop everything and have civil defence plans in preparation by Christmas is crazy.

Mick Chick A small amount of money for an insurance policy – that's all we're talking about.

Fred Barker Can I turn the discussion now to the recent Home Office Planning Assumptions Circular ES1/1984, and ask: does the document provide enough information to enable local authorities to make civil defence plans? Recently, for example, the National Council for Civil Defence has argued that more information was needed about hostile scenarios, including more information about possible weights of attack.

Eric Alley The answer has to be 'yes'. I think the local authorities got a little confused when they got the emergency planning guidance, in the same way that they got confused with the issue of former Home Office Circulars. The are not mandatory; they are advisory documents, to assist. If they do not assist you in how you wish to plan, you don't have to take any notice of them. You can still meet your obligations under the Civil Defence Regulations and totally ignore Home Office Circulars.

Simon Turney It is a paradox that those of us who in most circumstances oppose the propagandist and political attitudes of the National Council for Civil Defence, actually agree with them that the current government planning assumptions in ES1/84 cannot be regarded as comprehensive or up to date. The fundamental flaw in what the local authorities have been told is that the government takes the view that their planning assumptions are as detailed as the many uncertainties allow. We have not been asking for precision in terms of either weight or pattern of attack and likely effects. What we have been asking for is more open information. We know the studies exist in the Ministry of Defence and the Home Office, and within NATO. We have been asking for a better range of scenarios against which to plan than the tiresome verbiage of ES1/84.

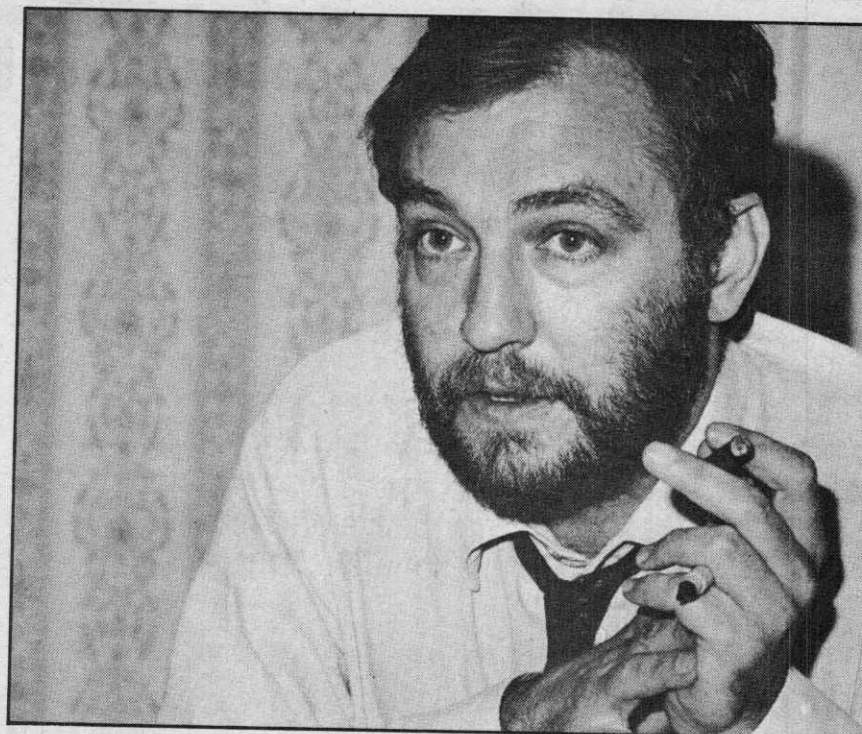
Hilary Richmond I do think the authorities require better planning assumptions. Cambridge City Council has questioned the Home Office planning assumptions. I can read to you the Home Office response: 'As regards the alleged conflict between planning for conventional and nuclear attack, one is not able to give general advice. The optimum solution will depend on local circumstances and resources in the locality.' In other words, these are matters for local decisions. Now clearly we should be able to produce our own planning assumptions on which to base our detailed plans. Can you therefore tell me why it is that the Home Office is most reluctant to commit itself to giving grants for us to be able to make our own planning assumptions?

Eric Alley The Home Office is not reluctant to give a grant to do studies on planning assumptions – as an Emergency Planning Officer I did it myself and have used a Home Office grant to do it. What we ask is an even-handed study. Now I've just come back from a county nuclear-free zone who did a planning assumption study. They produced an even-handed study from both their own scientific advisers and SANA scientists working together, about what could happen in that county under varying circumstances. It has been agreed, and they are now going forward with a working party to produce their set of plans. Nobody is arguing about that. Nobody can say you cannot have a grant for that.

Simon Turney But the Minister has announced that counties have to produce their plans by the end of 1985. Even the advice from your own Association has pointed out that the 1974 plans were not complete at the time of the repeal of the 1974 legislation – and your own colleagues urged on the Home Office that it was a patently unrealistic expectation for a complete set of war plans, capable of implementation of basic essentials in forty-eight hours, seven days for the rest, to be done in a period of eleven months.

Eric Alley I've visited my forty-sixth county today since March and in fact many plans will be in existence and will be lodged with us by the end of the year. There is no problem at all.

Simon Turney Then in that case there must be severe doubts about the intellectual or operational calibre of the material you have been bringing back in your briefcase, because all the professional advice, even from the GLC's own emergency planning department at the time of the issue of both the civil



SIMON TURNEY: 'the only defence against the nuclear threat is to continue to campaign, properly and meaningfully, for peace and disarmament measures.'

defence review and the ES1/84, was that the plans needed to be totally rewritten to take account of the shorter warning time. Without the luxury of the three-week period of international tension, the need to build into the plans the ability to implement them at such short notice necessitated a far more stringent approach to the operational content of those plans to meet the time scales imposed by NATO and government defence policy.

Eric Alley They didn't have to be totally rewritten at all, because if you look at the twelve items in the schedule of the Regulations, a lot of those should have been written by now: care of the homeless, emergency feeding, and so on should have been written, and they wouldn't need much bringing up to date. And I know a number of authorities that have brought them up to date, quite happily.

Mick Chick I think you'll find that the main argument from the profession is they want more time, but a plan is not a complete plan until it has been tested. It may be possible to write the plans within the timescale, but not to test and validate them.

Simon Turney But until a local authority has a robust and stringent set of planning assumptions, there is no point in actually attempting to start with a blank piece of paper and write the four letters 'plan' at the top of it.

Fred Barker We've mentioned that the Home Office has requested that local authorities complete plans by the end of 1985. It's likely that a large number of nuclear-free-zone authorities will not have completed their plans. What attitude do you think the Home Office will adopt towards those authorities? Are we heading for a confrontation between the local authorities and the Home Office?

Eric Alley No, I don't think so because in fact, apart from one or two, plans are coming in now. I'm collecting the plans even from nuclear-free-zone authorities. We shall take the plans we've got and assess them, and I shall go and talk to the individual authorities and say: 'You've got so far with these plans, what is your next stage?' and then agree with them on their subsequent priorities. It's no use us saying in January next year. 'OK. We'll tell the local authorities to produce their essential plans by the end of the year because a lot of them might not have them. We want what plans you have, all the plans available. Some are complete, some half done. Most have certainly got their communication plans and good plans for control structures.

Simon Turney There is no evidence at the moment that the government is proposing to crack the whip over recalcitrant authorities for their lack of civil defence plans. If at all it will be after the abolition of the GLC and the

metropolitan counties and at a time when the new fire and civil defence authorities are up and running. But, to go back to the patently unrealistic expectation by the Home Office, it was significant that the Minister did not use the power of direction available under Regulation 6 to *require* local authorities – it was a *request*. In other words, the carrot not the stick.

In terms of the submission of the completed plans, the gap between the cerebral activity of putting words on paper, be it for emergency feeding or sophisticated command and control systems, when that is put against the emergency planning officers' own study, now nearly a year old, about the number of districts with operational emergency centres, there were still 105 districts a year ago which had got to select sites for their district emergency centres. There are 25 shire counties which have not installed private wires, there are three metropolitan counties which haven't completed links to all districts; the protective factor survey in 48 counties hasn't started. Only seven counties had completed their plans under the 1974 Regulations, let alone any updating of them to take account of shorter warning time and the 1983 Regulations. Eight counties, presumably most of them nuclear-free, haven't got a main emergency centre. Sixteen didn't have a standby emergency centre, so that the pieces of paper that Eric Alley is going to be so conscientiously analysing and reporting to Ministers, when looked at against the level of achievement revealed by the emergency planning officers' own study, is going to be seen for the dream world it is.

Fred Barker We're going to have to wind up. What I want to do is to ask one representative of each side of the debate to sum up about how they see the future of civil defence in Britain.

Simon Turney We don't believe that while Britain remains a nuclear weapons state, a command, control, communications and intelligence outpost of NATO, and a staging post for American forces, that civil defence can offer any effective protection or assistance to the population of this country against the consequences of nuclear war. That is our bedrock position, and following from that, we believe the only defence against the nuclear threat is to continue to campaign, properly and meaningfully, for peace and disarmament measures.

Mick Chick I think it is very simple – you have a single choice. There is time now to do something or to do nothing. I don't believe that to do nothing is an option that you can take. ■

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Our booklet 'South Yorkshire and Nuclear War'
shows what would happen to one county

50p from South Yorkshire County Council (ref: CPR)
County Hall, Barnsley, S70 2TN



New Year Greetings to all peace campaigners from COHSE



Confederation of Health Service Employees
General Secretary David Williams
Glen House, High Street, Banstead,
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COHSE: The Health Service Union