

CIVIL DEFENCE

G.  
11/10/84

Sir.—In arguing that all-out nuclear attack on Britain is only one of several attack scenarios that should be taken into consideration when planning for civil defence, your leader (September 28) is in fact repeating the Home Office view in its new round of guidance to local authorities. Its circular ES1/84, argues that civil defence planning has to maintain a high degree of flexibility to take account of a series of possible stages of conflict, including conventional attack and "limited" nuclear attack.

In 1973, however, Home Office circular ES3/73 argued: "The current assessments point clearly to nuclear war as the overriding consideration in determining preparations to be made for home defence." More recently the Home Office has given increased emphasis to the supposed threat of conventional attack. This shift has been taken further in ES1/84 which argues that conventional air attack is a

serious threat to Britain.

What has changed to cause this distinct shift in threat assessment? Certainly not military postures or force structures.

The Home Office argues that negotiations could prevent escalation from conventional to nuclear attack. But military conflict in Europe would almost certainly go nuclear because nuclear weapons are so embedded in Nato force structures and military planning. Remember, Nato has consistently refused to adopt a no-first-use nuclear weapons policy. When conflict goes nuclear, Soviet strategy is to launch an unrestrained, massive, sudden nuclear attack on Britain.

What has changed is the credibility of the Government's civil defence plans. Although it has succeeded in getting new legal duties through Parliament, the Government has repeatedly lost the public argument. The BMA and Scientists Against Nuclear Arms, among others,

have rubbished the Government's civil defence plans for nuclear attack.

Here lies the answer to the increased emphasis on conventional attack. It is not based on changes in military strategy; rather it is a deviant attempt by the Home Office to boost the credibility of its civil defence plans. After all, who can deny that civil defence preparations to cope with the effects of conventional attack would be useful.

But the point is that civil defence cannot be justified by reference to conventional attack because nuclear devastation is still the overriding threat to Britain.

In the face of this threat, the Home Office's attempts to force local authorities to make civil defence preparations are to be deplored. CND gives its full support to those nuclear free zone authorities which will not play the civil defence game.—  
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CND.  
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G.M.  
20/6/83

## HOME NEWS

# Doctors to shun talks on nuclear defence

Representatives of Britain's 6,500 community health doctors voted at the weekend not to take part in nuclear civil defence planning until the Government improve present plans.

A motion passed at British Medical Association headquarters in London said present planning guidance is "wholly unrealistic to deal with the health problems which would occur after a nuclear attack."

It called on all doctors to take no further part in such planning until their criticisms were taken into account. The motion added that BMA members would be asked to advise the Government on how the present plans might be improved.

The main criticism of the present plans is that they are geared to a conventional rather than a nuclear war. Whereas medical supplies and treatment are best centralised for conventional war, it is though better to decentralise facilities in the event of nuclear attack.

The BMA's annual conference of community medicine also voted in favour of allowing a "conscience" clause for doctors who did not want to take part in civil defence planning. The motion said they should be excused from such work without detriment to their contracts or job security.

In spite of opposition from a minority of doctors, the meeting agreed that, in general, it was necessary to plan for the possibility of a nuclear attack on Britain.

# Wartime in Skye and Lochalsh — a preview

12/10/84

In the event of war, nuclear or otherwise, the wartime HQ in Skye and Lochalsh would be a large room with shuttered windows and two telephones.

A meeting of Skye CND formed of this last week by the man who would be the area's district controller with emergency powers if hostilities broke out, the district council's chief executive David Ayle.

Mr Noble, who with council agreement was addressing the meeting on the Government's plans for civil defence, said that he was neither as an enthusiastic advocate of civil defence nor as an expert on the subject.

He said that the Government saw the role of local authorities in the build up to an emergency as maintaining "business as usual", and that after conventional warfare had ended would emergency powers be reduced.

District authorities, said Mr Noble, would be required to play an independent role. He added that there was no question of council workers in Portree or Kyle, just an

emergency centre with some radiation protection. "It is not far off the mark to say that a large room with two phones and shutters over the windows would be the district control centre."

Mr Noble said the Government "almost discounted" the idea of a nuclear attack on this country, feeling that it would be highly unlikely because of the "balance of terror". Civil defence, he said, was relevant for conventional warfare, chemical warfare, and civil emergencies. The Government also assumed that there would be several weeks' notice for local authorities "to get their act together" before hostilities began.

New regulations will make it compulsory for all councils to take part in civil defence exercises when directed by the Government, but Mr Noble said that there were no penalties in the draft regulations for recalcitrant authorities and staff, as individuals could not be compelled to take training if they did not want to do so.

The main functions of civil defence measures are to organise a rescue service, dispose of the dead, prevent the spread of disease, provide emergency food, accommodation, and transport, and organise volunteers such as the Red

Cross, WRVS and ambulance services.

The relationship of the police to local authorities was, said Mr Noble, an uncertain issue. There has been a suggestion that under emergency powers the chief constable would have fairly absolute authority. Other issue matters, he said, included the management of food rationing and the role of the military.

"Speaking broadly," he added, "it would be the responsibility of the local authorities to try and keep services operating as close to normal in a very abnormal situation — that is very probably asking the impossible."

The most difficult matters would be food rationing and transport — civil defence planning seems to brush aside the implications of radiation hazard. When I was at the Home Defence College near York I found this aspect of civil defence planning to be incredibly amateurish."

Mr Noble's talk also revealed one unexpected bonus of having your name on the electoral register — it would ensure you of food rations in an emergency, as your name on the register would be proof that you have been put and not left home for an alternative place of safety elsewhere.

## ENTERTAINMENTS

## ACCOMMODATION