

I have made the assumption that most people attending this workshop will be reasonably aware of the structure and organization for the 'machinery of government in war'. Thus these notes deal not with the detailed organization of the Home Defence War Plans but are observations I have made whilst compiling a booklet for the Technical Authors Group (Scotland) on the Scottish and Lothian War Plans. I will prepare a brief summary of these plans for the workshop but imagine that most participants will wish to discuss the underlying assumptions behind home defence planning and the political effects of the recent and sudden increase in home defence activity. It is to such discussions that the following observations are addressed.

1. Staffing. Despite a general policy to reduce staffing levels in local and central government the number of staff involved in home defence planning has increased significantly. Scottish Office staff at Division 10 of the Scottish Home and Health Department who administer central arrangements for home defence planning were supplemented recently by a 'new four man team' (Scottman, 8.10.80.). Likewise the staffing levels in Lothian Region have increased: the one full-time Emergency Planning Officer (1979) now has an Assistant Emergency Planning Officer and an Administrative Assistant. But such figures only represent part of the increase. Additionally, last year saw the creation of the covert Lothian Region 'Home Defence Planning Group' which regularly draws on the time and resources of senior officers of other local government departments in the Region. Thus as many as 20 other staff from the Region may be involved on a regular basis in local arrangements for the home defence plan.

2. Expenditure. Despite the widespread cutbacks in public expenditure the Government have announced that they intend to increase the spending on home defence by 6%. Usually 7% of local government expenditure for home defence purposes is met by central government out of this fund. This means that the warringers who are the local guardians of home defence plans are looking forward to a period of unparalleled expansion, particularly the cost of involving staff and resources from other local government departments (see note 1) is not accounted for in the home defence budget.

3. Elite Administrators. The proposed 'machinery of government in war' makes provision for the joining together of the armed forces, the police and trusted senior civil servants into a sort of state junta - but even peacetime home defence planning creates an elite team of warringers. All full-time administrators of war plans will have undergone the positive vetting procedure of the security services. Others involved in a part-time capacity, either at a local level or as 'scientific advisers', are all hand-picked. Thus they form a growing elite in an exclusive team which is strengthened and isolated by the fact that they handle secret and highly privileged information.

4. Democracy? Not surprisingly, perhaps, there is no provision in the 'machinery of government in war' for democratic decision-making. But there is absolutely no evidence to suggest that, with the exception of a few ministers at cabinet level, any elected representatives are consulted or have any part in the construction of home defence plans. During the recent home defence exercise - Operation Square Leg - documents leaked to the Javelier revealed that Lothian Region's 'Home Defence Planning Group' had only planned to brief councillors on the Region's participation in NATO's Operation Cucumber after the event. In fact the ruling Labour Group did receive a briefing hours before the exercise was due to start and subsequently were able to prevent staff and premises being used in the exercise. Since then one councillor has been allowed access to more information on the previously covert Home Defence Planning Group' but on the strict understanding that this material is not to be shown to anyone else.

5. Peacetime Uses. Various authors have concluded that the 'machinery of government in war' may also be activated (at least in part) to deal with a situation of widespread civil unrest. A Home Office Circular (classified) in 1973 tends to support such assumptions. It states one purpose of home defence is 'to secure the United Kingdom against any internal threat'. Peter Laurie serves one chapter in 'Beneath the City Streets' to the state's preparations for dealing with a revolution. Although such applications of home defence planning do not relate directly to the war drive as should remember that in the context of international stress (identified by the warringers as culminating in a nuclear attack) the police are to be given the task of 'controlling the movement of subversive or potentially subversive persons', (Police Manual of Home Defence). These sort of details are not released to the public. Instead we have been given the almost humorously deficient 'Protect and Survive', worse still Lothian Region may soon circulate to warringers its own even more spectacularly deficient 'Community Survival Guide' (in preparation). Such peacetime circulation of this sort of material must engender a feeling in many members of the public that nuclear war might be more inevitable than they had previously thought. Thus the Government's war drive gains greater credibility.

To summarise: home defence represents warringering by a growing and elite group of civil servants, police officers and members of the armed forces. There is no democratic control over their war plans which are kept secret from the public. They control the information that is released to the public but when details of their 'classified' discussions are leaked it is almost impossible to believe the full extent of the war drive. In this vein I leave the last words to the officials. 'The Assistant Emergency Planning Officer analysed that the next war was likely to start at shorter notice....' (Home Defence Planning Group Minutes, Lothian Regional Council, 19.6.80).