

# Firemen to refuse cooperation with nuclear war planning

By Keith Harper, *Labour Editor*

The fire Brigades' Union is refusing to take part in a series of civil defence schemes aimed at training firemen to deal with the aftermath of a nuclear war.

Leaders of the union, which presents 42,000 firemen said yesterday that they believe at the Government wanted to train groups such as firemen and ambulance staff, to cope with a nuclear war.

The general secretary, Mr Ken Cammeron said last night: "We see it very much as a matter of there being no life after death."

The Home Office has invited union representatives to the Fire Service Training College, Moreton-in-Marsh, Gloucestershire, next week to discuss plans to cope with a nuclear war.

Mr Mike Fordham, the BU's assistant general secretary, who will represent the union, said last night that a Home Office document proposed two courses in 1983-4 and five courses each year afterwards.

He said that normally when training was undertaken, it had to be within agreed procedures, but "there is no agreed procedure to deal with a nuclear war."

The union's conference has already decided that its members will refuse to cooperate in civil defence training for this purpose. Its executive will be in session while the conference is on, but Mr Fordham said that no further decisions would be required.

Mr Fordham pointed out that the Home Office document said that it intended to recruit 60 fire officers to liaise between the Government and the fire authorities.

Mr Fordham said that this would be the first direct Government involvement in recruiting fire staff, which has always been done by fire authorities.

The union would still cooperate with training staff to assist in conventional wars and where there was a natural disaster.

The National Union of Public Employees announced yesterday that its 12,000 members in the ambulance service

would not take part in nuclear war exercises. Mr Roger Poole, the union's national officer, said that civil defence planning for nuclear war was futile because of the widespread destruction which would be caused.

He was replying to a letter sent to selected chief ambulance officers by Mr Ted Turner, the home defence planning officer for Wessex Health Region, which suggested that the ambulance service should control first aid posts and casualty collecting centres.

Mr Turner's letter said: "I am under the impression that the ambulance staff would welcome the opportunity to carry out these duties in the evenings and at weekends during the quiet hours."

Mr Poole said that Nupe would not be party to the "deceit" of making people think that war was survivable.

The Department of Health and Social Security said last night that it had asked health authorities to prepare plans because there would be survivors of a nuclear war and there was a responsibility to care for them.

24/6/83

# 151 councils shun civil defence regulations

By Robin Thorner

Under civil defence regulations which came into force on Thursday December 1, 151 local authorities are now breaking the law because they are not taking appropriate action in planning for a nuclear emergency.

The new Home Office regulations mean that councils must provide blast proof bunkers and communication links, train staff in civil defence, and take part in exercises ordered by the Home Secretary. But the 151 local authorities—mostly

Labour-controlled ones which have declared themselves nuclear-free zones—still refuse to make any substantial preparations until the Home Office provides more coherent guidance. Delegates from the national steering committee of nuclear-free zone authorities met Mr Douglas Hurd, a Home Office minister, this week to clarify their position. After the meeting they said: "The Government and the Home Office are in disarray in their planning assumptions for the type, but delegates thought this was totally inadequate."

They said the Home Office could not supply precise planning assumptions because of "the wide spectrum of attack patterns." But it was trying to amplify and update its guidance, they said. The delegation had made it clear that they could not prepare plans without the necessary planning assumptions. The minister had made it clear that the preliminary circular issued in July would be followed up with more detailed circulars but delegates thought this was totally inadequate.

Manchester's chief executive, Mr James Hetherington, secretary of the NFZ movement, wrote yesterday to its other members advising them not to declare policies of co-operation or non-co-operation with the new regulations; nor to make any substantial preparations, until the Home Office decides upon and makes plain to local authorities some coherent guidance. The letter invites other councillors to a conference at Manchester town hall on January 27, by when it says the steering committee may have a clearer idea of what is expected of local authorities. An international conference of NFZ authorities will be held in Manchester in April. The NFZ steering committee believes that the regulations are "ill-drafted, contradictory, and aimed at misleading the public about the effects of nuclear war." The regulations would not have any easy passage because the local authorities are totally opposed on every point and the circulars would be examined carefully and fought over, *Grassroots, page 9*

1/14/85

# Nuclear bunker row

HUGO DAVENPORT on how a Conservative council defied Whitehall

THE Government is in danger of sabotaging its campaign to force local authorities to carry out civil defence preparations against a nuclear war because of its own parsimony.

The risk arises from the financial pressures on councils struggling under the threat of rate-capping, and from the miserly funds allocated to civil defence duties.

This ironic twist in the cat-and-mouse 'war' between the 158 'nuclear-free' authorities and the Home Office became embarrassingly apparent last week when Hammersmith and Fulham Council in London refused to bear the cost of building a new bunker to protect senior staff in time of war.

Unlike the overwhelmingly

Labour-controlled authorities which make up the nuclear-free lobby in local governments, Hammersmith and Fulham is Conservative controlled with the support of two Liberals. It has no pretensions to being nuclear-free.

After examining the Government's specifications, Hammersmith decided that the existing command centre—a neglected room in the Town Hall equipped with Second World War telephones—could not be brought up to the required standard.

Nothing less than a new bunker would fit the bill. The borough architect costed it at £592,950. The proposals were sent to the Home Office with a request for the 75 per cent aid promised to complying councils.

The Home Office offered £30,000 and helpfully included details of three cheaper schemes: a buried shelter on open space at £183,000; a hermetically sealed basement in the Town Hall at £207,000; and a less ambitious Town Hall scheme at £104,500.

The council replied that it could not possibly spend the amount suggested by its own arithmetic. Mr Simon Knott, a Liberal councillor, said last week: 'I take the view that, if the Home Office wants all this, the Home Office can pay for it.'

'I'm pro-cruise, because I believe cruise to be a very cost-effective form of defence, but I don't believe that a nuclear bunker in Hammersmith is cost-effective.'

CIVIL DEFENCE

Answers 11/11/84

The Government's behaviour is arousing curiosity among other local authorities anxious to comply with the law. At the end of 1983, the Government stiffened its powers of compulsion and laid new duties on local authorities. For all its stern words on civil defence and appointment of a special adviser to investigate failures, the Government has set £15 million of sums ploughed into all authorities. The Home Office admitted that a ceiling of £200,000 had been placed on district civil defence spending. The county limit is £23,000. These amounts are supposed to cover all costs.