

to some extent to the increasing presence of peace campaigners from Greenham and elsewhere among its less articulate inmates. Brixton Prison's psychiatric wing, for example, while it has not been the subject of the same complaints about staff, is situated in cells which, according to one medical officer, "were built in Victorian times and would now shame the people who built them".

A massive, and dramatic, increase in the prison population over the last decade has imposed all sorts of pressures on staff and prisoners alike. Cells meant for one person by the Victorians commonly contain two or three prisoners.



Brittan's remedy is to build 14 new prisons and employ 4000 new officers by 1991, but Paul Cavadino says that this will just encourage the courts to fill us the extra places, not reduce overcrowding: "What is really needed is to reduce the number of people held on remand (20% of the prison population nationally, but 40% in London and other cities). The number of prison staff has increased three times as fast as the prison population since the war, but because there are so many more remand prisoners they have to spend more and more of their time going to and from court rather than anything else. Releasing more people on bail would solve the problem of overcrowding and understaffing instantly, without putting the public at additional risk at all because so many of these people are released when they come to court anyway."

#### COSMETIC INQUIRY

MIND say that C1 wing should not be used for psychiatric cases at all. "Even if everything else that is wrong about the place was corrected, its basic design precludes it from being used as a psychiatric unit," said William Bingley. "Ideally, people with mental problems should be dealt with by the NHS, but in the short term proper centres should be set up within the prison system, with some degree of outside control to prevent the sort of abuses we have seen at Holloway." He is, however, pessimistic about the prospects for anything more than "tinkering with an inadequate system". A Home Office enquiry into Holloway Prison is due to report in July, but indications are that it will offer nothing more radical than a couple of extra portacabins in the prison grounds.

"If that's all they come up with," said the prison officer I spoke to, "They may as well have just locked these women up and thrown away the key, because there's precious little difference between that and what we're doing now. People watch these Dickens series on the TV and they think 'how terrible'. What they don't realise is that the same thing's happening now."

STEVE PLATT

## Government sneaks out new Protect and Survive, while...

# NFZs stand firm

The government's latest move in its campaign to force Nuclear-Free Zone (NFZ) local authorities to take part in nuclear war planning was sneaked out last month almost embarrassedly—a stark contrast to the major publicity given to "Civil Defence" initiatives since *Protect and Survive* in 1980.

The government, annoyed at the determination of more than 150 NFZs not to take part in "Civil Defence" and their wrecking of the 1982 "Hard Rock" exercise, put new Regulations through Parliament in December 1983 in an attempt to force them to make war plans. A few NFZs—notably Gwynedd in West Wales—announced they'd defy the new Regulations and risk councillors being surcharged for the cost of the government stepping in to make their war plans for them. The overwhelming majority, meeting as the "Manchester Conference of NFZs", took the approach that they couldn't make plans if the government wouldn't tell them what to plan for—what kind of attack to expect, how likely the government's policies made such an attack, and so on.

The government has naturally been reluctant to make public its assumptions on questions like this: the NFZs have not made any war plans. And their number has continued to grow—the latest being Shropshire last month. The large number of "hung councils" at county level means that there are high hopes of more NFZs: East Sussex is likely to be next.

In early June a "leak" was made that a revised edition of *Protect and Survive* and a pamphlet *Civil Defence and the Farmer* were to be quietly slipped out. The farmers' pamphlet was indeed quietly placed in the House of Commons library—but not *Protect and Survive*. Press and media attention were focussed on the lunacies of the farmers' pamphlet, with its suggestions of herding cows into ditches to avoid blast and so on.

#### PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

But other, less colourful, documents were slipped into the library (therefore officially published, without announcement) at the same time: these included the new "planning assumptions" that the NFZs have been demanding. The government may now claim that it *has* told the local authorities what to plan for and may apply legal pressure to make them join in the farce of Civil Defence. Just a year ago, such a move would have been given a press fanfare and Ministers would have been wheeled round chat shows to make the case for council employess being virtually conscripted into Holocaust games like *Hard Rock*, as demanded by the 1983 Regulations.

The new documents include a report on training Civil Defence volunteers, a book-

let on the United Kingdom Warning and Monitoring Organisation (of the UKWMO bunkers), a handbook on selecting buildings for communal shelters and a report on living and working through radioactive fallout; the main one is *Emergency Planning Guidelines for Local Authorities*. This is in fact little more than a re-hash of the old "Emergency Services" policy circulars from the Home Office (kept secret for 35 years til their publication last year).

The *Guidelines* do reflect the Home Office's new-found belief that nuclear war would be preceded by a period of "conventional" warfare: it admits that emergency plans for the two possibilities conflict (eg concentration versus dispersal of people and resources), but says nothing on how the government expects councils to simultaneously achieve opposite goals! The risk of the "Nuclear Winter" is still completely ignored.

#### NOT WASTING RESOURCES

On June 28, the Steering Committee of the Manchester Conference met and



## NUCLEAR FREE LOCAL AUTHORITIES

agreed that the issue facing them was still not one of compliance or non-compliance with the regulations: they couldn't carry out the government's wishes until it gave them proper planning assumptions to work on. In practice this means that the NFZs will still not be wasting resources on planning for nuclear war. A confrontation with government looks likely, possibly in the autumn. Meanwhile, several councils, including Shropshire, are considering preparing their own reports on what nuclear war would *really* mean for their areas, besides the Home Office's fantasies. The Greater London Council will publish such a report early next year.

MIKE HOLDERNESS

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