

# Rustic's nuclear retreat

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IN THE countdown to an Armageddon situation, Eric Alley, the Home Office's civil defence adviser and architect of the Government's £300,000 public relations campaign, would hope to shelter with his family at their remote cottage in Humberside.

"It's a perfectly adequate fall-out shelter," he assured People yesterday. "It's got good thick walls and it's a long way from any target. We have adapted one room and there's a covered well. It's my philosophy that provided you are not under the direct effects of a weapon you will survive."

Alley, aged 63, had been in local authority civil defence for 34 years before he joined the Home Office two years ago to assess the national scene ("like a curate's egg; bad in places"). Ruddy in complexion, rustic in attire and described by acquaintances as much too mild to convincingly clobber the nuclear-free zones, he refutes CND's gibe that no amount of PR packaging can make people believe the unbelievable.

"If they mean that everybody is going to die, they may be right, but they have no right to play God and say that. All right, we are not going to have a National Health Service; we are going back to another Stone Age society. But there will be survivors and people are going to have to look after themselves."

He also denies that the campaign is fudging the distinction between nuclear war and civil emergencies in a misleading way, pointing out that the local statutory regulations are identical to those in the Geneva Convention covering the emergency spectrum.

"I served through the last war and that's nothing compared to conventional war today. The Lebanon is a classic example of a country that didn't want civil defence. They had to learn as they went along and they have not learned very well."

"The Lebanon has the same sort of complex as we have here: if we have civil defence are we not encouraging war? It's the kind of thing that is thrown at me. I regard all war as obscene, and nuclear war is the ultimate obscenity."

He laments the politicisation of civil defence, fondly recalling the annual camps until 1968, when the budget fell from some £25 million to £3 million overnight. He was

## HO Currie turns her sights on smokers

JUNIOR Health Minister Mrs Edwina Currie yesterday suggested a cure for Britain's smokers: "They should give up and bite their nails instead," she said.

Mrs Currie, who caused an outcry when she said that crisps and ignorance were responsible for ill-health in the north of England, also had a word of advice for drinkers.

In the light of a report which suggests that one-and-a-half pints of beer for a man and a pint for a woman is the safe daily maximum, Mrs Currie suggested that people should walk to the pub, stay sober and walk home.

Traditional beef and Yorkshire pudding also came in for comment as Mrs Currie pronounced it "all right" so long as it was eaten with the proper healthy side dishes and vegetables.

Her comments came as she sat down to a carefully stage-managed breakfast at a hotel in York.

Mrs Currie declined eggs, bacon, sausage and fried bread and instead helped herself to a bowl of nuts, bran flakes, oats and fruit.

She said of her earlier comments: "If it means that people sit up and take notice I'm quite willing to take the flak. We've never had so much media interest in healthy food before." She said she had received a "very substantial" number of letters from people backing her stand.

Mrs Currie was in Yorkshire for talks with health and nutrition experts at the Civil Defence headquarters at Hawkhills, near Easingwold, who would be responsible for food advice in the event of nuclear war.

Her cure for smokers came when she claimed that 60,000 to 70,000 people a year could save themselves from preventable diseases.

Mrs Currie's cure has yet to succeed in her own home. Her husband, Raymond, 40, said yesterday: "Yes, I am still a smoker

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## Health workers ignore Home Office

The Government is trying to get tough with local authorities who have not produced civil defence plans. And almost at the same time, an extensive poll indicates that local health organisations are virtually ignoring Home Office instructions.

The poll shows that only 15 per cent of health authorities have completed plans for medical services during and after nuclear war. Twenty per cent of local medical officers responsible for drawing up National Health Service plans think the Government's proposals are a waste of time.

Those views coincide with a British Medical Association warning that a nuclear winter would mean starvation for those people who were not killed directly in a nuclear attack. A report issued by the BMA's board of science and education says nothing particularly new about the nuclear winter. But it does emphasise previous BMA warnings. It also points out that there would be a major increase in disease as immune systems broke down, making people more susceptible to cancer and tuberculosis.

Dr David Josephs and Dr Peter Sims, of South Bedfordshire Health Authority, with the help of the World College of Physicians faculty of community medicine and the Medical Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons, asked medical officers in every British health authority - 234 of them - what they thought of the Government's nuclear war plans. Replies from 165 MOs showed that only 15 per cent had completed plans, 45 per cent had not even started to plan and nearly 10 per cent had no intention of starting. About 55 per cent were in favour of plans, but nearly 20 per cent of those said Government guidance was inadequate. Seventeen per cent were facing resistance from local councils who had declared themselves Nuclear-Free Zones.

It is three years since the Home Office ordered local authorities to submit copies of up-to-date nuclear war plans. The councils were notably unimpressed - and remained so. So now the Home Office has said that it will use powers of compulsion under Regulation 6(f) of the Civil Defence (Grant) Regulations. This regulation empowers the Home Secretary to appoint commissioners who would complete plans at the council's expense.

Undeterred, NFZ authorities are repeating what many of them have already said: that the Home Office has not given them adequate planning information; that they are planning to collect their own local information; and that they will not be able to consider plans until they have acquired this information.

For the Home Office the fact remains that those people who know anything about civil defence continue to think it irrelevant.

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