

FEATURES OF THE NEW PROPOSALS

(a) Emergency Centres

Each Regional and Island Council will be required to establish, equip and maintain two emergency control centres for use after a hostile attack. Each District Council will be required to provide one such centre.

(b) Additional duties for local government staff

The regulations will mandate councils to train "an appropriate" number of staff in civil defence and to make available for Home Office training staff who are intended to have civil defence duties in any area specified by the Secretary of State. The relevant unions have not been consulted by the Government. The potential industrial relations ramifications have caused widespread concern.

(c) Recruitment of volunteers

Councils will be compelled to recruit, train and make use of volunteers for civil defence. Considerable disquiet has been expressed over the costs of this new duty and the use of staff time. There is also concern about possible industrial relations difficulties caused by training volunteers in the use of local authorities' equipment given the potential this creates for a strike-breaking force.

(d) Participation in civil defence exercises.

All local authorities will have a direct duty to participate in civil defence exercises. This provision tacitly admits that the Government's plans and assumptions command such little support that they can only be implemented by compulsion. Scientific and medical experts have severely criticised the calculations and assumptions behind the Government plans and rather than meeting these criticisms openly the Government is hiding behind these measures.

(e) Financial costs

The regulations will involve major new costs for local authorities in providing emergency centres, training, volunteers and staff time required for increased planning functions and to cover for staff called away from normal duties for training. Twenty five per cent of salaries and associated costs will be borne on the rates. Increased total expenditure could bring councils into rate support grant penalty zones and the Government has given no assurance that this expenditure will be exempted from normal expenditure limits.

(f) Discretionary powers

The Minister will have discretionary powers to give individual authorities specific instructions on how they are to implement their new duties. This will lead to a further erosion of local government democracy and opens the way for the 156 "nuclear free" councils to be subject to particular harassment.

(g) Enforcement

Failure to carry out the instructions issued by the Home Secretary or Secretary of State for Scotland would lead to commissioners being sent into do the work, charge the full rate without the benefit of grant aid, and surcharge councillors for the additional costs.

CIVIL DEFENCE?

THE CIVIL DEFENCE GAME - EPISODE 2

In 1982 the Government's "Hard Luck" exercise related Civil Defence preparations to a supposed nuclear attack. The plans were shown to be so inadequate and farcical that widespread opposition from local authorities and public activity by CND forced cancellation of the exercise.

This year the Government is taking no chances. New proposals for Civil Defence against nuclear attack are to be foisted upon unwilling local authorities and citizens.

So that the inadequacy of the proposed preparations will be less obvious, they are not related to any specific scenario of attack - they are to exist in a vacuum.

In case local authorities and others remain unconvinced by this re-hash of last year's farce, the Government proposes to impose the regulations on an unwilling people.

WHY CND OPPOSES THE PLANS

The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament fully supports the principle of an effective, adequately funded network designed to cope with natural disasters, fire and industrial accidents. However these sort of preparations are entirely separate from civil defence preparations which are concerned only with the effects of a hostile attack. There are a number of important reasons why we believe it is necessary to oppose civil defence arrangements while the UK remains a nuclear weapons state.

Misleading the public

Civil defence plans and the statements of those involved in their preparation frequently give the impression that most people will survive a nuclear war.

People who can be persuaded that they have a reasonable chance of surviving nuclear war are more likely to become dangerously complacent about the increasing dangers of the arms race and more likely to accept military strategies which envisage first use of nuclear weapons.

Leading authorities in the scientific, medical, military and political fields, have stated emphatically that the notion of a "limited" nuclear war does not stand up to rational scrutiny and that there can be no effective civil defence against the effects of a nuclear war. It is doubtful if anyone can believe that effective defence can be provided at a cost of 86p per person - the sum the government proposes to allocate to the purpose.

The link to nuclear weapons strategy

Civil defence in a nuclear weapons state ties in closely with military strategy. The Home Office Training Manual for Scientific Advisors explains "No defence strategy based on deterrence can be convincing if it fails to include an element for Home Defence"

Destabilising effects

Civil defence preparations by a nuclear weapons state are generally interpreted as part of war preparations by their opponents. Major civil defence works could add significantly to the tensions of an international crisis.

The threat to civil liberties

The vast bulk of civil defence plans and preparations are concerned with the preservation of political and military control structures. Only the work of investigative journalists has revealed plans for summary executions, priority for VIP casualties the blocking of main roads out of cities and the details of military exercises which prepare to deal with civilian demonstrations and resistance in the "transition-to-war" phase.

Conclusion

Even if there was a comprehensive civil defence system which could provide effective short term protection against the effects of nuclear attack for the general public there would be no protection against the long term results. The BMA has commented that it is difficult to see how much more than a small fraction of the initial survivors could escape famine and disease in the following years.

No one who seriously examined the likely consequences of a nuclear war and scale of the contribution that any civil defence measures might make could seriously consider the Government proposals.

CND cannot accept that civil defence is anything other than a public confidence trick. The presence of nuclear weapons in the UK makes this country a priority target for any Soviet nuclear attack. We must remove these targets before we can begin to consider providing effective protection for all of the population.

CIVIL DEFENCE: TRADE UNION POLICIES

NALGO "Conference condemns the Government plans to increase the planning duties of public authorities and the attempt to conscript unwilling workers into taking part in war-planning which is an unsufferable limitation of the civil liberties of public employees. Conference believes that these plans are a sham, designed to mislead the public into thinking that a nuclear war could be survivable.

Conference is opposed to any increased expenditure on "civil defence" by a nuclear weapons state, particularly when other public authority services are being slashed and lives now are put at risk because of health service cuts.

Conference instructs the NEC:

i) strenuously to oppose any attempt to conscript workers into nuclear war preparations or any training of volunteers in emergency services which might enable them to be used as strike breakers;

ii) to inform union members that they will have the support of the union if they refuse to take part on the grounds of personal consciences or on the grounds that his/her contract of employment has been unilaterally varied, and to draw up such contingency plans as may be necessary to protect members who oppose this war-planning and the central collation of evidence of such discrimination.

Conference also instructs the NEC to provide branches with further publicity material exposing the hypocrisy of civil defence planning for nuclear war, and to campaign for support for these policies among other trade unions who have members concerned with any aspect of civil defence;

to work together with "nuclear free" Councils and the peace movement on the issue;

to initiate a campaign for increased public authority provision for dealing with civil emergencies in peace time

NALGO CONFERENCE JULY 1983.

Fire Brigades Union

"As an organisation we refuse to participate in any form of plans or exercises which are only a crude attempt to give

credibility to the Government's war games". Statement adopted by Conference 1983.

ASTMS

"This Annual Conference notes with concern the Government's intention to increase the so-called civil defence duties of local authorities. We are totally opposed to:

1) any attempt to conscript local government employees into preparations for nuclear war;

2) any increased expenditure on civil defence, especially at a time when all other areas are being cut;

3) any training of volunteers in emergency service roles which might enable them to be used as strike breakers;

4) any attempt to delude people that civil defence could protect them from a nuclear attack on Britain as a nuclearweapons state and the use of public funds by the present Government to spread propaganda in favour of nuclear weapons.

This Annual Conference affirms that it will take such action as may be necessary to protect any member who may be in any way prejudiced as a result of following his or her conscience in this matter. This Annual Conference instructs its NEC to:

1) inform branches of this resolution and urge them to:

a) oppose the new regulations

b) inform local MPs of their position and this resolution.

2) fight for the inclusion of unilateral nuclear disarmament in the Labour Party manifesto.

3) call on all local authority ASTMS councillors to vote against these regulations and, as far as possible, write to each ASTMS councillor; individually urging such action".

1983 Conference.

COHSE

"This conference notes with concern the increasing militarisation of society. It instructs the EC to take such action as may be necessary to protect any members of the union whose work may be in any way prejudiced as a result of following their consciences in the matter of nuclear weapons...

Conference believes that there is no defence

against nuclear war and will support any union member who refuses to become involved in civil defence work.
1982 Conference.

British Association of Social Workers

"This AGM considers that, because it provides no effective protection for the general population from blast or radiation in the event of a nuclear attack, the Government's plan for civil defence in the face of nuclear attacks is unrealistic, inadequate and inhuman. This AGM therefore offers its full support to any member of the Association who objects to being involved in war planning exercises and urges the Council to guarantee assistance and representation to any member facing disciplinary action as a consequence of taking such a stance".
1982 AGM.

SOGAT '82

"This Policy Conference considers that civil defence in the event of a nuclear war is not only a waste of money but equally is designed to mislead people into believing that such civil defence can offer some protection in the event of such a war. This Conference considers that the best defence for Britain is to denounce all nuclear weapons and dismantle the present civil defence structure.
1983 Conference.

NUPE

"....Conference applauds local authorities which have declared 'nuclear-free zones' and have not participated in civil defence exercises. The Conference instructs the Executive Committee:

to make known to the Government its opposition to any plans to conscript workers into nuclear war preparations;

to call on NUPE members in all services not to cooperate with any civil defence exercises;

to inform members that they will have the support of the union if they refuse to take part on the grounds of personal conscience;

and to draw up such contingency plans as may be necessary to protect members

if the proposals become law...."
1983 Conference.

AUEW Construction Section

"This conference....opposes the present policy of civil defence in the event of nuclear warfare. Conference believes that the money spent on this should be used for:

- more and better housing for our people.
- a much better National Health Service;
- much better education facilities for our children.

Resolution for 1981 Labour Party Conf.

NGA

"We believe that the powers the Government intends to take unto itself in pursuit of Conservative Party policies are a direct infringement of the liberty of British citizens. We believe that there are ample grounds to doubt whether these policies have the majority support which would justify the power over individuals the Government intends to take in these regulations. Furthermore the implications of the Government's action in making further inroads into Local Authority democratic autonomy by use of the power of law are unacceptable...."

Letter to TUC, January 1983.

Scottish National Party

"This Conference believes that plans for Civil Defence in the event of nuclear war are not only an irrelevance but a calculated attempt by the Government to condition and persuade and persuade Scots that survival after a nuclear holocaust is possible.

Conference declares that there can be no defence civil or otherwise against nuclear war and that the only hope for survival lies through nuclear disarmament. Conference therefore opposes spending on Civil Defence against nuclear attack and supports the action of Scottish local authorities in declaring their regions or districts nuclear free zones.

In order to minimise the chances of Scotland being involved in a nuclear war, this Conference calls on all local authorities in Scotland to support the concept of Scotland as a nuclear free zone.

"Conference urges all Scots, who are opposed to siting of nuclear weapons in Scotland, to realise that only an independent Scottish Parliament will make the decision to remove nuclear weapons from Scotland."

CIVIL DEFENCEMORE INFORMED OPPOSITION

The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities opposes the Government's civil defence plans. It has objected to inadequate consultation, to the way in which formal directions will be issued to authorities and to the financial arrangements.

The following motion was passed at the meeting of its Policy Committee held on 14 January 1983.

"The Convention views these Regulations as yet another example of this Government's apparent intention to destroy the reality of local decision-making while maintaining its pretence. Local authorities have and will continue to need a capacity to deal with civil emergencies. The Convention however-

- (1) is alarmed at the constitutional, ethical (including industrial relations) and financial implications of these Regulations; and
- (2) considers it hypocritical that no provision is even being attempted for shelters for the public on the grounds obviously that such provision would involve expenditure not on the dimension of the present £43 million but of many thousands of millions.

The Convention therefore rejects the Regulations and invites the Government to consider whether it would not be more honest of them to take over the function of civil defence, given that so clearly it is a key element in this Government's defence strategy".

Royal College of Nursing

The RCN report "Nuclear War and the implications for Nursing" gives the grim details of the huge numbers and categories of dead and dying that could be expected from a nuclear war.

The Home Office pretence in its Protect and Survive pamphlet that the population could safeguard their lives with little effort is scathingly dismissed.

The Home Office is also castigated for leaving out of its estimates of the dead and dying the huge numbers who would be burned beyond recovery.

"All the adjectives of doom in the English language would hardly do justice to the effects of a nuclear strike involving (even) one major weapon.

"The inescapable fact is that in the context of a nuclear attack, the skills and training of any nurse would be rendered virtually irrelevant.

In the absence of Fundamental essentials such as a radiologically clean environment, uncontaminated water supplies, energy, public utilities, basic drugs, dressings and equipment, nursing, as it is generally understood, would be impractical".

Medical Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons

"Medical planning for major civilian disasters is an integral part of the Health Service. Government has indicated that such planning should be extended to cope with the effects of a nuclear war. The British Medical Association considers the current plans are unsound and unappropriate but the instinct to look for any possibility of help has led them to hope that better plans can be evolved.* The Medical Campaign against Nuclear Weapons opposes the idea of any such planning as being totally unrealistic. Any likely Soviet attack on Central Scotland would destroy the Health Service framework, both hospital and community. Doctors and nurses would be casualties in the same proportion as the general population and survivors would be left with none of the equipment or drugs of 20th century medicine to offer. Planning implies some form of available facility and a mechanism of co-ordinating its use. Neither of these would apply to the aftermath of a nuclear war".

*Some Health Boards have appointed planning officers; others have declined to do so.

October 1983.

C I V I L D E F E N C E ?ADVICE TO GROUPS

1. Adopt a high profile in opposition to these regulations.
2. 'Hard Luck' was a strikingly successful campaign last year. Use the same materials and the same tactics: Build your own shelter in the shopping centre, petition, leaflet, perform street theatre, all aimed at providing the public with the basic truths about the Civil Defence fraud.
3. Hold public showings of videos such as 'No Place to Hide'. If you Love this Planet', 'The Last Epidemic', 'Prophecy' etc. (Contact Nancy Dangerfield, 041 776 6651 for details).
4. Buy and display the new Civil Defence Exhibition, details on Appendix C, or better still, convince your local authority to do so.
5. Use your local knowledge and contacts to approach local councillors and your M.P.
 - Urge inert but friendly councillors to become active in their opposition to the proposals.
 - Send messages of support to those M.Ps, councils and councillors who are joining us publicly in opposing the proposals.
6. Where feasible, approach those local voluntary organisations, e.g. WVS, Red Cross, etc., who are likely to be involved in Civil Defence. Stress to them why we oppose the proposals and spell out the basic nonsense of the plans. Concentrate on the practical impossibility of preserving water or food supplies, that co-ordination is most unlikely, that every attack scenario envisages every general hospital in central Scotland being destroyed, that their probable role will include digging mass graves, etc.

Even if the regulations are passed by Parliament that is not the end of our campaign. We must continue to demonstrate their irrelevance and impracticality, so that they become a dead letter. One way to do this is continuously to ask local authority and government to clarify exactly what the regulations mean, and to go on doing so.

The strength and breadth of opposition has already won modifications. The requirement for all local authority staff to perform civil defence duties, has been modified to appropriate staff, and plans for the organised evacuation of civilians have been dropped. (For 86p per head, the Government's financial allocation, there is a limit to what you can do in civil defence terms!).

Remember, we won this campaign last year, and we can win it again.