

# Party marriage of convenience on civil defence

By BRIAN PENDREIGH

Civil defence got a low priority but civil marriages by justices of the peace fared even worse at Lothian Regional Council yesterday.

Civil defence has become one of the council's favourite topics in recent years. The Conservatives regularly support it and Labour opposes it.

Councillor Donal Gorrie, the Alliance leader, managed to inject a little freshness into the proceedings. He accepted the Conservative argument that it was a statutory duty but proposed that the council tell the Scottish Secretary, Mr George Younger, that his

spending limits made it impossible for it to meet all its statutory and moral duties.

He said that it would need double the money and that civil defence should get a low priority. His proposals were combined with Labour proposals which dismissed as futile plans to protect the local population if nuclear war broke out. They also banned any increase in the number of emergency planning staff.

Councillor Malcolm Knox (C) said: "I think we should be seen to be carrying out our duties even if some of us think

that they won't be tremendously effective."

The Labour-Alliance proposals were approved 27-22 and overturned a committee recommendation to recruit five emergency planning officials.

CIVIL DEFENCE