

Coastguard difficulty over submarine warning system

By JAMES McKILLOP

ARMED Forces Minister Jeremy Hanley yesterday assured a delegation of Scottish MPs that the Ministry of Defence and the Navy were not only anxious to retain the Subfacts submarine warning system for fishermen in the Clyde, but wanted to extend it into the Minches.

However, Labour MP George Foulkes said after the meeting with the Minister that there was concern over the attitude of the Chief Coastguard, Commander Derek Angona.

Mr Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) said: "Commander Angona claims that the six three-minute broadcasts after weather forecasts interferes with his search-and-rescue work.

"He wants the broadcasts switched to British Telecom, but the fishermen don't listen to that frequency.

"We argue that prevention



George Foulkes:

"Scheme being endangered."

is better than having to initiate a rescue. We are, after all, talking about a safety measure, intended to cut out potential disasters."

Apart from Mr Foulkes, Mr Norman Godman, Labour MP for Greenock and Port Glasgow; Mrs Ray Michie, Liberal MP for Argyll and Bute; and Mr Calum MacDonald, Labour MP for the Western Isles, took part in yesterday's talks.

Mr Foulkes said: "We were very pleased with the response

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of the Minister, but we are disturbed that the scheme could be put in jeopardy at the whim of one official."

He said all the parties involved would get together on next Tuesday at a meeting of the Fishing Safety Advisory Committee.

The Clyde fishermen, the Scottish Fishermen's Federation, the Chief Coastguard, the Navy, and the Ministry of Transport all would take part in the talks.

"If we do not get a satisfactory conclusion then, we will seek a meeting with Lord Caithness, the Transport Minister, and urge him to intervene.

"He has the power to order the Chief Coastguard to fall into line. Whether he does that may be a different matter," Mr Foulkes said.

"We believe this vital and lifesaving scheme is being endangered not by the MoD nor the Navy, but by the Chief Coastguard and we will continue our fight to save the Subfacts system."