

Doomsday insurance

Sir Frederick Warner FRS is in the process of raising a 100-strong volunteer force of kamikaze OAP scientists. After a nuclear war or 'improbable accident', Sir Fred and his men would boldly go into the dangerously irradiated areas in front of the regular forces 'to survey and monitor'. Since all would be over 65, they could face up to the increased cancer risk since their ordinary life expectancy would be shorter than the probable deadline for post-holocaust symptoms to show.

He gave this news to the Institute of Actuaries when asking what additional insurance premiums might be demanded from his volunteers.

It will come as a great relief to CND members to know that the Life Insurance system is expected to survive more or less intact after any nuclear war. No medical services, no food, no daylight but, see, picking his way across the blasted landscape, here comes the Man from the Pru, briefcase in hand, flourishing a fistful of claims forms . . .

The scheme has been put to the Government and he is 'patiently waiting' for an answer.

Thanks to the *Electrical Review* for first noticing this splendidly encouraging item.

● **Lionel Trippett**

CD

Sanity: June 1988

dic- the
stra- ned- impact
After hree
As- not
ocal
that
ined
lace
must
lan- ces
em- ncy
edi- to
of
and
hat
edi- as- ta-
,"
ng
ble
he
ed
re-
n-
ed
s
e-
re-
n-
is
c-
is
g-
al-
s-
t-
r-
e-
a-
y-
l-
r-
e-
r-
e-
r-
g-
r-
h-
e-
ef-
as-
d-
a-

A national disaster agency

16 6 88
G

WHEN the question of funding an independent disaster agency with its own inspectorate is raised, the inevitable comment is "Where is the money to come from?" One answer might be to look at the cost of providing the resources to deal with accidents which should never have happened. What was the total cost of the rescue efforts at Zeebrugge and King's Cross, and what will be the cost of caring for those involved in the months and years to come? Bearing in mind that the chemical industries already have to contribute heavily to safety plans and to public information, it does not require a great leap of the imagination to think of extending this to transport, leisure, and other areas of potential danger.

A county fire and emergency planning officer recently said "if the Government were to turn the attentions of their Audit Commission to emergency planning the results would be devastating." However, it may well be that funding is not the real issue, because prudent and expert planning saves lives and resources. One must also examine departmental inertia, the lack of serious consultation with the key experts who are, and have been for many years, deeply concerned about the growing dangers, and what has been described as "an overall lack of political will."

Political will involves the populace and Parliament. People rarely imagine a disaster happening in their own community, but one doubts that this will necessarily be so after the events of 1987. If the voters decide that amateurish attempts at safety, or no attempts by certain commercial interests, are just not good enough, and if it is brought home that the dangers are not just occasional land-slips, but the ferry that a great many people use for their summer holidays or the underground that they take daily, then the "political will" could appear overnight.

So what are the elements of the national disaster plan

which countries like Australia and Canada have found to be essential "to minimise the effects of emergencies on life and property"?

● A statutory foundation for emergency planning at local, regional, and national levels, allowing adequate funding for an "all hazards" approach to emergency planning.

● The incorporation of all essential professional and voluntary bodies into the disaster plan. In most countries this invests the control of the professional bodies with the police, and the voluntary bodies with the Red Cross.

● Primary emphasis is on local response. Regional and national support is given in response to local needs. However, there is a central co-ordinating department, usually with a Minister for Emergency Planning, which brings together all the departments who can play a part in laying out plans and equipment in advance of an emergency.

● A statutory responsibility on local, regional, and national bodies to meet several times a year.

● A national committee organised to include police, fire, coroner, and government departments like meteorology, conservation, emergency relief, and supply, finance, health, Red Cross, St John's, media, and transport.

● Representatives of industry and the trades unions to sit on the committee so that their resources are known and their co-operation agreed in advance.

● A Counter Disaster Training College to assemble the best available experts to train professionals and volunteers, to collate and produce information and to pass on developments in technology.

● A disaster team ready to move to the site and provide on-spot assistance.

● A central casualty bureau with permanent emergency lines to take control.

In Victoria one of major daily newspapers runs an annual appeal to implement and build up supplies for homeless and evacuated people.

HOME NI

Plan for

N-war 15/1/88

aftermath

'futile'

By Martin Wainwright
CIVIL DEFENCE authorities in South Yorkshire have told the Government it would be "totally futile" to plan for any sort of normal life after a nuclear war.
Scientists and civil emergency officers, who had been asked by the Government to analyse the likely problems, published their findings yesterday in the area's quaint command bunker at Cusworth Hall, near Doncaster.

A computer flickered with details of an imaginary attack. Next door a table was piled with a fortnight's supply of rations and equipment — creamed rice, peach slices, batteries and string.
Reading matter included a poster from the hall's folklore museum upstairs: "Mexborough Electric Theatre. All seats disinfected with Jeyes Fluid. We present the Harvest of Sin, a thrilling story of the downfall of a bank clerk."

The downfall of South Yorkshire would be fairly complete in a nuclear attack according to the statistics, which the Government has requested from all local emergency authorities. Up to 962,000 people (74 per cent of the population) would be killed. The minimum would be 75,000 dead and 26,000 injured.