



Mass demo at nuclear bunker

THE NUCLEAR BUNKER at Waterton, Bridgend was the scene of a mass public meeting, followed by a visit by almost 50 county councillors — and the peace pickets are still firmly entrenched

Almost 300 people answered the pickets call to attend a public meeting on the site of the bunker, opposite the Sony Factory on

realise what was going on — but few of them are ready to go against their party dictate", he added.

Bridgend
CND
Banners



ABOVE: Campaigning against the spending of over £1m on the county bunker, members of C.N.D. groups, councillors and the public are pictured at the demo.

LEFT: A solitary police constable stands on top of the bunker while a C.N.D. poster waves from the radio mast. Gazette reporter Mike Smith was at the scene.

Sno

Peace camp' set up by bunker protesters

WORKMEN yesterday refused to walk out on a £400,000 scheme to upgrade a Welsh county civil defence control bunker after pressure from anti-nuclear protesters.

Members of CND have now set up a "peace camp" outside Mid Glamorgan's bunker near Bridgend and have vowed to stay until the work is completed.

The bunker was built just before the last war as an ammunition store at the town's huge armaments factory, one of Britain's biggest.

It is being upgraded in the light of experiences during the 1980 nuclear-war Exercise Square Leg.

The deputy clerk of Mid Glamorgan County

Council, Mr Michael Davies, said last night, "I do not know if the protesters' caravan is parked on our land. At the moment we are not too concerned, but it depends how it develops."

The Rev Gronw ab Islwyn, of Treorchy, chairman of CND Wales, said, "We are not trying physically to prevent the work, because it is on the councillors who voted for a nuclear-free county and then commissioned this work, that the pressure should be brought."

Mr Davies strongly denied CND claims that the bunker would only be used during war.

"We would have been very happy to have used it during the snow," he said. "Unfortunately, we had

already stripped out everything in preparation for the contractors.

Bridgend CND spokesman Mr Tony Simpson, said the "peace camp" will last day and night. He said recent work at the bunker had included the installation of teleprinters from the Government's various nuclear war centres, plus land lines to the regional control bunker for South Wales at nearby Brackla.

Bomb bunker picketed



PEACE GROUPS from Bridgend, Maesteg and Plantwit Major are taking part in a round-the-bunker picket to protest against the £2m. conversion project at the county nuclear bunker on the Industrial Estate.

They have threatened to maintain their vigil for months if necessary to force Mid-Glamorgan County Council to abandon the work.

Members of C.N.D. groups from all over Mid-Glamorgan are supporting the picket and a caravan and tent have been placed on the site near the Sony Factory on the Bridgend Industrial Estate.

The Secretary of the Bridgend group Mr. Steve

Samuel, said: "We think it is wrong that this money is being spent on something like this when other services in the county are being cut."

The C.N.D. groups met in emergency session to discuss the bunker and decided to take "direct action" to stop work going ahead.

The organisers are trying to maintain a token peaceful picket for as long as possible on site and have been in touch with the council's contractors, Faiclaugh Brothers of Taifs Well.

However, Deputy County Clerk, Mr. Michael Davies, said the demonstrators had agreed to move their vehicle to enable workmen to enter

the site and that work was proceeding as normal.

"The pickets are trying to persuade rather than stop workmen from entering the site and work is going ahead as normal — If the work is stopped we would have to pay damages to the contractors and so the public would end up paying even more," he explained.

Mr. Davies said that the C.N.D. pickets were on council land but County Council would allow them to remain to put forward their views.

● Pickets at the Mid-Glamorgan bunker on the Bridgend Industrial Estate protesting about the spending of £2m. on selective civil defence.

TE, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 1981

Gazette special report

Survivors go underground

IN A warren of tunnels, underneath Brackla Hill the Home Office is prepared for the nuclear holocaust.

Just a mile or so from the homes and offices of Bridgend, a micro village is ready and waiting for civil servants fleeing from an atom bomb.

Behind steel blast doors lie 380 bunk beds with two sheets and two blankets each, a kitchen with knives, forks and spoons for 380, coffee machine, and stainless steel sinks. There are men's lavatories, urinals and showers, and a smaller women's powder room complete with mirror.

There is a partly equipped BBC radio studio, rooms banked with empty filing cabinets and packed with tables, each with a phone. There is a communications

room, map store, and telephone exchange.

In every room clocks are ticking and pinboards and pictures line the walls, waste paper bins lie under the tables, fire hoses and signs to the fire exits have been posted.

There is 25,000 square feet of brightly-lit and centrally-heated office and living space for 380 privileged civil servants who have been assigned to live out the nuclear war.

After the Bridgend branch of the CND movement claimed to know where the sub-regional HQ nuclear shelter was, the Gazette staff asked to be taken in the shelters.

The Home Office agreed, and three senior Home Office officials came up from London and met Gazette staff at the blast doors.

"In a period of crisis when nuclear war threatened, certain staff would have to stay alive to pick up the pieces for the survivors", said an official, explaining the need for such a shelter.

"The staff would have to perform essential duties and be located in protected accommodation".

If Whitehall is no longer able to govern, senior civil servants will take to tunnels in the ground to try and continue to govern. There are 17 sub-regional headquarters, as they are known. And the tunnels under Brackla Hill are HQ 82 serving Gwent, West, Mid and South Glamorgan, Dyfed and Powys.

In the Brackla bunker a Regional Commissioner "would operate as the highest level of internal government".

The Home Office are cagey as to the identity of the Regional Commissioner,

just saying he would be a "junior minister".

"Commissioners are not appointed in peace-time", they say. But they do admit the Brackla bunker is within 48 hours of readiness for a nuclear war.

And on entry to the shelter buried beneath concrete, steel and 40 feet of earth, it all seems prepared.

One of the men who met the Gazette at the door was a Bridgend man, Les Courtier, the shelter's security officer.

During the tour of the yellow painted rooms and corridors, the Home Office officials explained exactly how "the protected staff" were to be protected from nuclear fall-out.

"Of course if the bomb falls right on top of us we wouldn't stand a chance, either", said one, "this centre is only to escape fall-out."

An explosion on or near the ground sucks up a large amount of earth which is vaporised as it rises and becomes highly radioactive.

"It then condenses to sand-like particles which are carried along by the wind and drop to the ground. Fall-out can be carried by the wind for hundreds of miles. And it can be deadly dangerous, although it cannot be seen or felt".

He explained how the air from outside was filtered for radioactive dust as it came into the shelter. Then the air was forced round the building and could be re-cycled many times.

Len showed how the centre would continue in the face of power failure. He turned off the power and the lights failed and the hum of the air pump could be heard winding down.

A pause of eight seconds and their



Photofile

Pictured above: One of the dining rooms, co



in the Doomwatch dungeon

own generator came into use — the lights flared and the pump started up again.

"If this generator fails there is a back-up one we can start manually", he explained.

How long could people survive down here?

"About 30 days, we think", they said, "obviously we can go on longer, but it all depends on the amounts of fuel, water and food available.

"The scientists tell us that if there was an attack on this country, the radiation would be down to a level to permit outside movement in 14 days".

The tour came to a halt outside four black tanks, tanks to hold 15,000 gallons of water.

The water is in the tanks now, and Len changes it every month, and adds chlorine. He tests it by analysis every

week.

Near the front door is a decontamination unit to wash radioactive dust off anyone coming in from the contaminated outside.

Would you let anyone in if they knocked?

"Not unless they would be of some use in the recovery programme. We couldn't take in any more than the 380 assigned, actually", an official said.

What if someone decided to try and get in by force?

"We would not let them in, we would just shut the blast doors on them — they would need a lot of force to break those down", he pointed out.

The party went deeper into the earth to see the Commissioner's room, complete with desk, chair, telephone and filing cabinet. "There will be a bed in

here, too", said an official.

The party continued into the telephone exchange:

"We would have a British Telecom engineer in here to maintain our lines", it was explained. "We have lines to the local authorities, other sub-regional headquarters and to the UK Warning and Monitoring Control service in Banbury".

There are also more than 200 extension lines to every room in the tunnels. Communication can be over lines, or switched to radio if they are disrupted.

Next door is the message room, filled with teleprinters and tape relay machines.

How long have all these been here? "About five years, but the centre has been considerably overhauled since August 1980".

When the Thatcher government took office it decided to accord high priority to the defence of the nation.

In August 1980, the Home Secretary, William Whitelaw, said: "We believe that to be seen to be prepared at home, as well as capable of military deterrence and defence will make war less likely".

He announced that £45 million a year would be spent on completing sub-regional HQs and improving the early warning system.

So there is now a BBC radio broadcasting room as well. It is the only room with a carpet, and it is fitted out just like the studios of broadcasting house.

"One of our main roles if the bomb dropped would be to inform the survivors outside of such things as the radiation levels, when they could come out of their own shelters, how to bury their

dead, etc.", said an official.

Plans have reached an advanced stage. It has been worked out that there will be a ratio of 1:5 of women to men in the shelter, and the toilet facilities have been constructed accordingly.

No families of the civil servants will be allowed in, and accommodation is in dormitories, separated for men and women. Small lockers stand by the beds and personnel will be advised to take as little as possible into the shelter.

Although the dining room and kitchen is fully equipped, there is no food down there at the moment.

"We sincerely hope this shelter will be going to lie dormant for the next 20 years, or more, so we have not brought any perishable food down here. There would have to be done in the 48 hours before the bomb", said an official.



Photofile

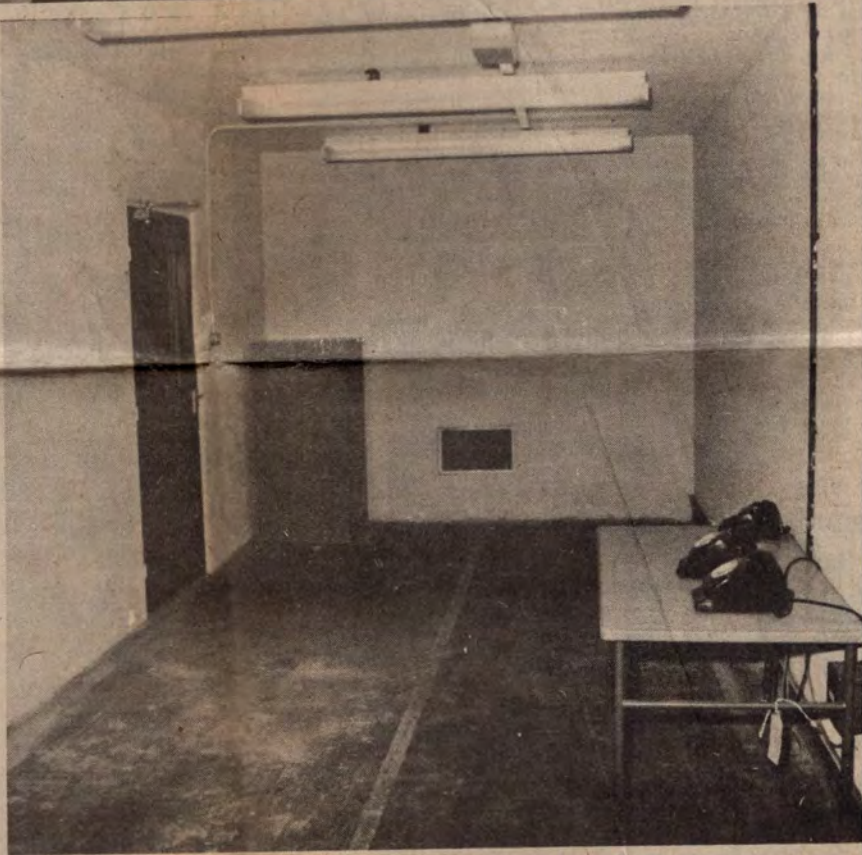
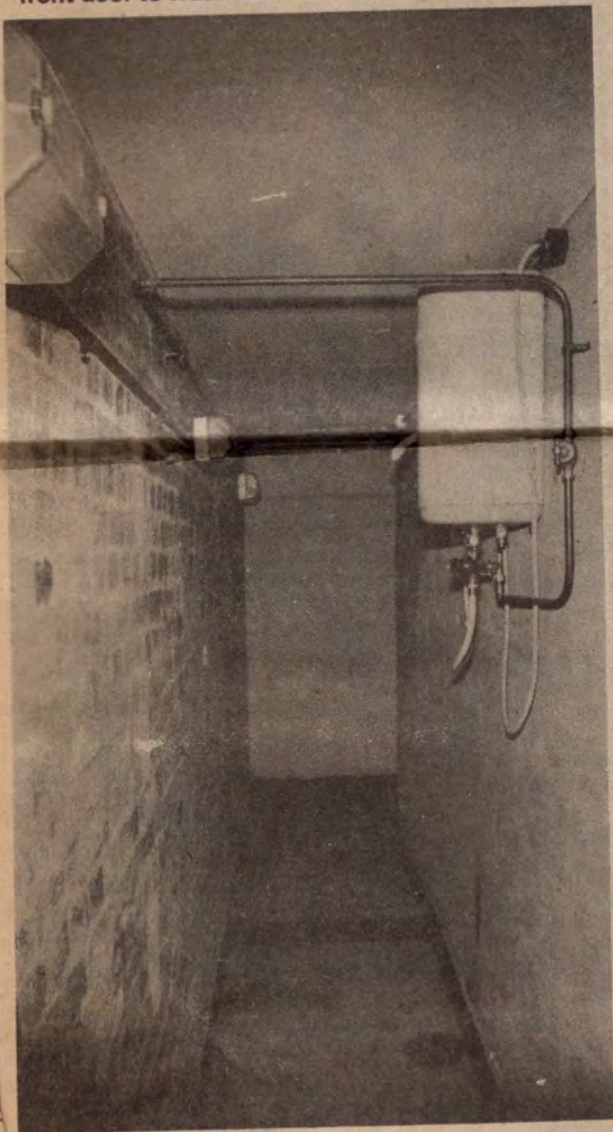
Pictured left: The communications room, which will keep the protected authorities in touch with the outside world.

Photofile

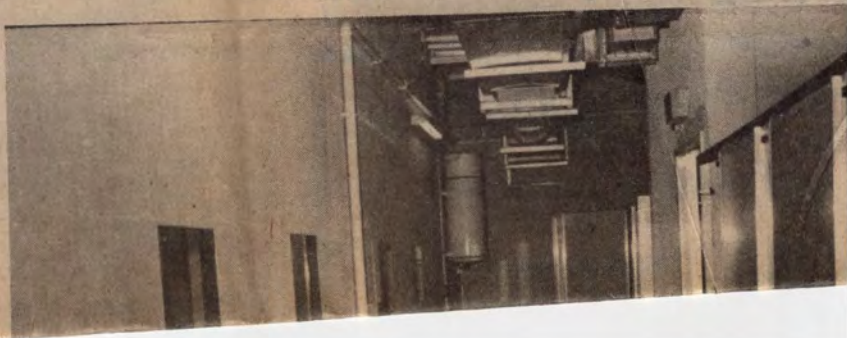
Pictured above: One of the dining rooms, complete with pictures on the wall.

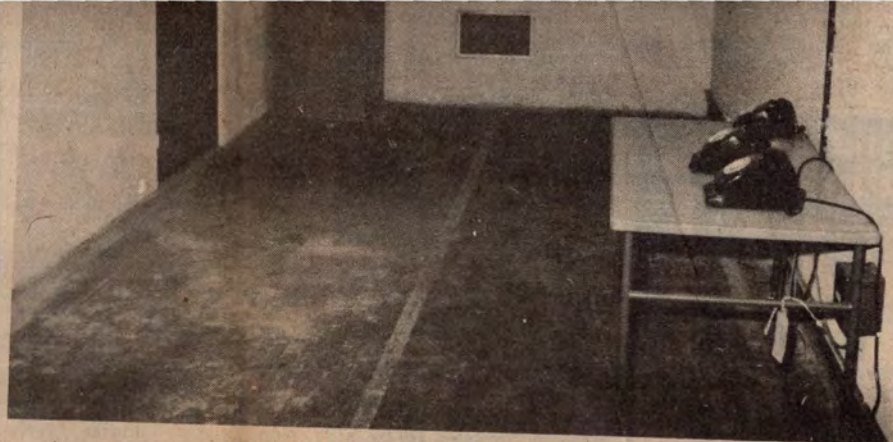
Pictured right: The warren of corridors beneath Brackley Hill.

Pictured below: The decontamination unit at the front door to wash the radioactive dust away.



The partly equipped Commissioner's room.





The partly equipped Commisioner's room.



One of the men's washrooms: a line of wash basins stand ready to wash the hands of the protected staff.



Where the protected staff will sleep; none-too-luxurious beds in a dorm.



Above: Clean and sparkling....the stainless steel kitchens to feed 380 survivors. BELOW: The BBC radio station, set to broadcast to the survivors "radiation levels and how to bury your dead,

Story:

Paula O'Shea

Pictures:

Howard Balston

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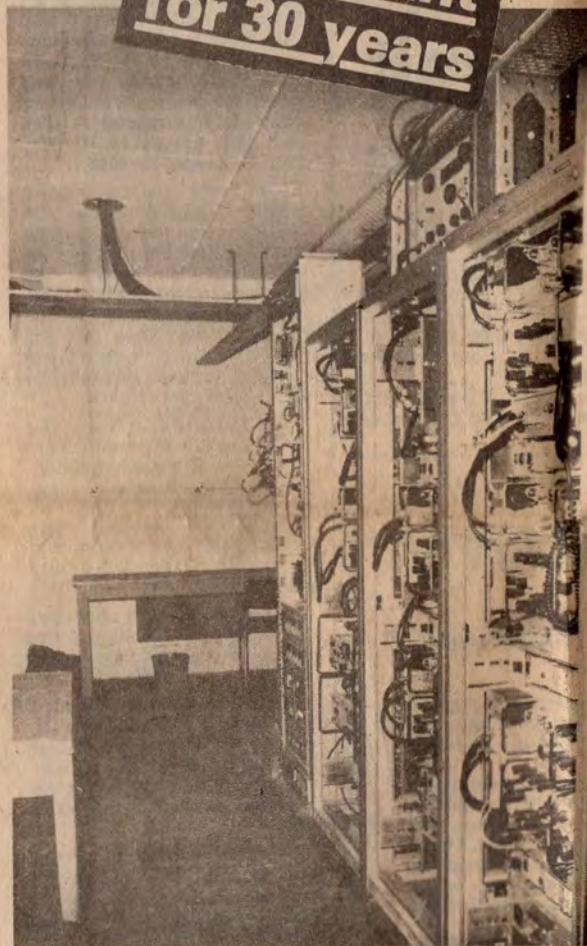


**No families
of civil
servants
will be
allowed in**



A Home Office official, Mr Geoffrey Cotterell stands by the telephone exchange, which is fully operational.

**We hope
this will
lie dormant
for 30 years**

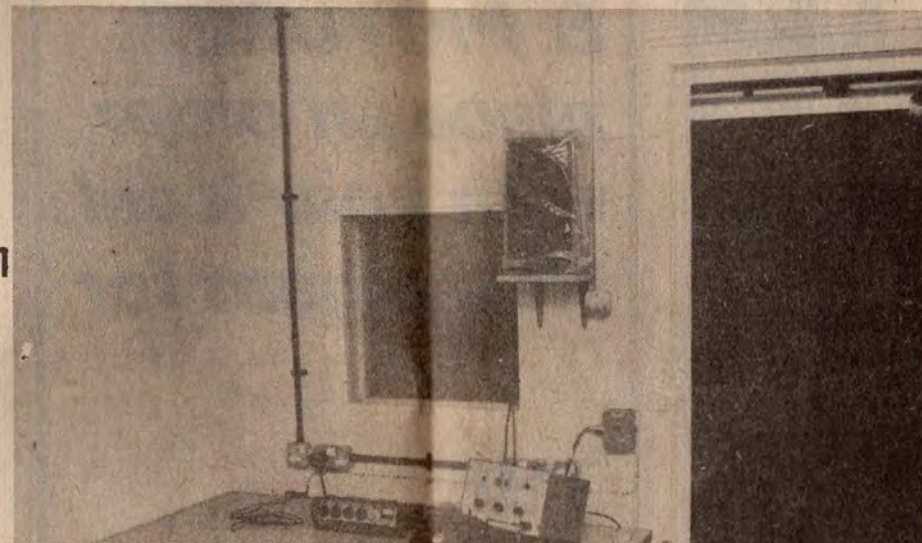


Telecommunications equipment which is linked to the radio mast on top of Brackla Hill.



Above: Clean and sparkling....the stainless steel kitchens to feed 380 survivors. BELOW: The BBC radio station, set to broadcast to the survivors "radiation levels and how to bury your dead,

Story:
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Howard Balston



Pictured left: The communications room, which will keep the protected authorities in touch with the outside world. Pictured above, the teleprinter room, which is also a part of the communications network.

Man with the loneliest job...



Paula O'Shea

LES COURTIER, of Cefn Glas, has a peaceful, lonely and unhurried job — and every man, woman and child in Britain should pray it stays that way.

Because 55 year old Les, of Longfellow Drive, is the security officer of the Home Office Nuclear Shelter sited in Bridgend.

He took on the job in 1976 after travelling the world as an international soccer coach.

"I was heartily sick of the professional soccer world," says Les, who has coached Argentina's squad and trained footballers in Nigeria and South Africa.

"The pressure was intense, you can't make instant footballers like you can coffee, and the pace of life was damaging my health," he continues.

"So I came home to Bridgend, where my wife Wyn, was born and somebody told me there was a job going in the Home Office.

"I was quizzed about my background back to the grandparents of me and my wife. After months of their investigations I learned I had got the job. I took over from an ex-superintendent of the police," he says.

So for the last five years

Another day at the office . . . 40 feet below the earth, in charge of an uninhabited micro-village. Les Courtier surrounded by mementoes of his previous career.

Ex-soccer coach Les hopes whistle won't blow

Les has been the lone security officer in charge of 25,000 square feet of bunker.

He works an eight hour shift and it is all in a day's work for Les to check the electric generators, air filters, water tanks and plumbing, and carry out routine repairs.

"I must admit it was strange at first to be down here all on my own," he says, "And I wondered if I would be able to stand the solitude at the start.

"But I am my own boss down here, there's nobody breathing over your shoulder — the pressure is off," he continues.

Les says he does not get lonely because nearly every day officials from either the Home Office or the Department of the Environment pop in to check on various things.

And although some might

find a life below 40 feet of concrete, earth and steel rather claustrophobic, Les doesn't mind.

"You get used to it," he explains.

He is a keen wildlife enthusiast and regularly feeds the birds and squirrels who inhabit the fields around the bunker.

"We get owls and woodpeckers here, and there is one particular robin that comes and perches on the door handle to be fed."

In his spare time he often goes for walks in the country for a breath of fresh air, and is also a skilled cook.

Down in the bunker he has his own small stove, where he rustles up his lunch every working day.

But what does he feel about the wider aspects of his unusual job?

"I don't think there will be nuclear war," he said.

"As long as we are properly defended, nobody will dare invade.

"The Russians invade defenceless countries like Afghanistan, whose only army is a group of tribesmen. These CND people are a bunch of alarmists.

"If we didn't have these shelters, people would soon complain," he adds.

Has he got a place in the shelter in the event of the holocaust?

"I haven't been told I have — but they will need someone to show them how it all works," he suspects.

Meanwhile, from Monday to Friday Les follows his unhurried routine away from the pressures of world-class football, hoping the referee's final whistle never blows for mankind.

● Home Office takes the Gazette inside the bunkers. See pages 14 and 15.

nuclear bunker

THE NUCLEAR BUNKER at Waterton, Bridgend was the scene of a mass public meeting, followed by a visit by almost 50 county councillors — and the peace pickets are still firmly entrenched

Almost 300 people answered the pickets call to attend a public meeting on the site of the bunker, opposite the Sony Factory on the Bridgend Industrial Estate.

The meeting was addressed by peace worker Mr. Paul Llewellyn of Bridgend C.N.D. and three county councillors who have publicly opposed the film conversion work — Plaid Coun. Ted Merriman and rebel Labour councillors Jeff Jones, Maesteg and Morgan Chambers from Merthyr.

Over 20,000 leaflets have been circulated throughout the county and workers on the Industrial Estate have been approached by peace campaigners — "we have had a very, very sympathetic reaction", said Mr. Llewellyn.

The day following the well attended public meeting about 50 members of the county's Public Protection Committee and the County Clerk, Mr. Hugh Thomas, visited the site.

Mr. Llewellyn explained, "The visit was arranged before the picket started to inspect the work in progress. When the councillors were at the site a deputation from the pickets met them and argued against work continuing".

He said that the county representatives again asserted that the bunker was principally a civil emergency centre intended to deal with non-wartime situations.

"We gave them specific details from their own documents which relate to decontamination rooms, that doors should face away from blast areas, that there should be an independent water and power supply and that consideration should be given to blast proof walls and earth embankments.

"All these details, and more, prove beyond any doubt the true nature of this nuclear bunker for council officials", he argued.

Mr. Llewellyn said it was agreed that the decontamination room was intended to deal with radioactive dust but that the members refused to accept that the project should be abandoned.

"This has gone from being just about nuclear war and civil defence. We are concerned about the democratic accountability and a crisis of confidence in the running of our county council.

"A number of councillors have admitted they did not

realise what was going on — but few of them are ready to go against their party dictate", he added.



while a C.N.D. poster waves from the radio mast. Gazette reporter Mike Smith was at the scene.

Sho

N-bunkers set up in Bridgend, say group

NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT activists in Bridgend are about to publish a pamphlet which they claim gives information about a network of underground bunkers secretly developed near the town's largest housing estate.

They say that people walking their dogs near the Brackla area, gave them the first clues that unusual activity was going on — and that set them on months of research work.

Now they are to publish the booklet which reveals they say, that the home defence centre for South Wales is centred in the massive bunkers dug originally to store munitions in World War II.

They say it is "vital" for people in the area to know what has been going on and that even councillors are not aware of the development.

'Furtive'

Mr Paul Llewelyn, of the Bridgend branch of CND and university lecturer Mr Tony Simpson have researched the information.

It is to be included in their publication, H-Bomb On Ogwr, which they say is the first major study of a nuclear attack and its consequences for a community in Wales.

"Ordinary people kept telling us there was something going on at Brackla Hill and we believe the sub-regional control for Wales has been established there, in the Coed Y Morfa woods," said Mr Simpson. "It is an enormous undertaking and two of the bunkers have been renovated and sealed. We believe there is a lattice of tunnels linking the major areas underground there and this has all been done furtively and relatively recently."

Echo Reporter

He said he had visited the Ogwr Borough Council's planning department and they seemed puzzled that he should be asking about the area. No planning permission for any development had been given, but it might be that it was not required, he said.

Lorries

"It seemed obvious to us that something strange was going on there," said Mr Simpson. "People had seen lorries arriving at night and we have now inspected the large reinforced steel doors which have been put on the bunkers and which are built to admit only people."

He went on: "There are no windows, so the bunkers are obviously lit by power and there is, in fact, a new sub generator in the woods."

"There is also evidence of a generator behind the facade, as you can hear humming, and a notice outside warns that there are 6,000-gallon fuel tanks in each bunker. Obviously the place is being kept comfortable ready to be occupied."

"The doors are blast-proof and we believe there is an escape hatch there. Despite the fact that the area is used by residents for recreation, they have

● Turn to page 2

**CHOIR
TOUR:**

Bridgend bunkers

● From page 1

been successful in preventing too much suspicion. We think it is in the public interest that this information should be made known."

Mr Simpson said the bunkers existed to offer protection and a means of life support to just a few people.

They wanted the public to start asking questions about why the bunkers were there, what were their functions, who were they designed to protect and who would be the people who would use them.

He said the "veil of secrecy" shrouding the bunkers was "ominous." One councillor they had alerted had asked questions but had been met with nothing but evasiveness.

"The decisions about this installation have been taken executively, by officials, without reference to Parliament or to any local authorities, it seems," he said.

Mr Llewelyn said that the installation was part of a far broader picture and that it was vital to the nuclear debate that people should know what was going on.

In a joint statement, they said: "Many people may be concerned to know that the Government's command bunker for nuclear war preparations is not in a distant military establishment but in the heart of the Glamorgan countryside near one of Wales's most modern housing developments. In fact, it is here in Ogwr. While children play nearby officials are rehearsing for World War III."

17 centres

A spokesman for the Home Office said there are 17 sub-regions throughout Britain and they were set up in secure locations in varying types of places.

"The purpose would be for a junior Minister to take a small team in the event of a nuclear attack," he said. "He would take over the administration of the area until normality. The locations of these sub-regions is not particularly secret, the reason we do not give them out is mainly because of vandalism."

£1m. bunker work: Labour 'fools' attacked

OGWR'S Labour county councillors have been challenged to admit they were wrong in voting for £1 million conversion work at the Mid Glamorgan nuclear bunker at Waterton Bridgend, writes Mike Smith.

And the C.N.D. pickets at the bunker have been invited to put their case to members of the county's Public Protection Committee.

Plaid Cymru Councillor Ted Merriman described members of the controlling Labour group on the county council as "either hypocrites or fools" for agreeing to spend £75,000 a year, for 15 years, on work at the bunker.

Said Coun. Merriman: "The trouble going on now with C.N.D. groups picketing the work and some councillors seemingly unsure of what is going on just goes to show the stupidity of the Labour group."

Coun. Merriman explained that in December the Labour controlled council agreed to declare Mid Glamorgan a nuclear free zone.

"Part of that agreement was that no decision would be taken concerning civil defence until after a special revue had taken place.

Converting

"Immediately after Christmas what did they do but agree to spend £400,000 on converting the bunker at Waterton into a nuclear emergency centre."

He pointed out that the cost of the work would exceed £1 million as the money had to be borrowed and repaid at a rate of £75,000 for the next 15 years.

"All this at a time when the Labour group argues that it cannot afford to pay for school equipment and transport," Coun. Merriman added.

He further argued that as

Labour 'fools' attacked

From P. 1

the whole bunker project was shrouded in official vagueness, some Labour Councillors had probably voted for the work without fully realising the true nature of the project.

"The council was assured this centre was for peace time emergencies such as natural disasters. However, since then official documents have come to light proving the bunker is a county control centre the event of a nuclear war," he explained.

"Apart from Jeff Jones from Maesteg and Morgan Chambers from Merthyr, the rest of the Labour councillors have closed ranks and refuse to admit they were plain wrong," said Coun. Merriman.

He called upon the councillors to admit they had made a mistake and cancel the project.

"The people of Ogwr are in the middle of a controversy, which has consequences for the whole county, and eventually the whole world," said Coun. Merriman.

"Fortunately the public reaction has been one of outrage that the council has agreed to spend this amount of money — and they must continue to voice their opposition."

Representatives of the C.N.D. demonstrators, who have picketed the bunker for almost two weeks, have been invited to speak at a meeting of the county's Public Protection Committee.

Mr. Paul Llewellyn, Bridgend C.N.D. said: "We were told we could address a meeting of the committee at the end of March, but that was of no use to us.

"However, I have just received a letter from the County Clerk, Mr. Hugh Thomas, inviting representatives to a meeting later this month.

The representatives will attempt to persuade the members of the committee to change their decision concerning the controversial bunker project.

Mr. Llewellyn agreed that although several councillors probably did not know the full consequences of voting for the scheme, they would not admit they were wrong and go against the Labour Whip.

Public 'misled' on bunker

By ROD LIDDLE

TWO confidential reports on work being carried out at a nuclear shelter have led CND activists to claim Mid Glamorgan County Council are "deliberately misleading the public — and their own members."

The documents — passed to CND officials from an undisclosed source — describe the extent to which the council have gone in making their bunker on the Waterton Industrial Estate, Bridgend, blast proof.

The first is a council report from the public protection committee, dated March 17, 1980. It reminds members of their duty to

"undertake certain measures to ensure that in the event of war as many of the local population as possible are able to survive," and advises further spending on the bunker.

The second is a report of a meeting held inside the shelter, dated June 17, 1980, and quotes progress in furnishing the shelter.

The content of the documents "appalled and amazed" Plaid member

Coun Clayton Jones, who said it was evidence the council were "deliberately misleading the public and their own members about their commitment to civil defence."

Chairman of the public protection committee, Coun Doug McDonald, declined to comment on the disclosures.

CND officials claim the

● Turn to page two

TUESDAY

(2)

you both.

Public 'misled'

● From page 1

reports are "complete proof" that work now being carried out on the shelter — the site of a anti-nuclear protest — is for wartime emergencies and not civil disasters, as the county council have claimed.

The second document is the "Report of a meeting re Bridgend Control Centre." It quotes a "decontamination room required near an entrance to comprise small room and shower."

"Doorways could be arranged to face away from greatest blast sources and blast walls/embankments considered," the report continues.

A spokesman for CND, Mr Paul Llewellyn, said: "This is direct evidence the county council are equipping the shelter for wartime purposes. I think they are trying to deliberately mislead us."

"More information will be released to the public from us at a CND rally at the bunker on Sunday — it is vital the public learn the truth about the county council's actions," he added.

County clerk and chief executive of Mid Glamorgan, Mr Huw Thomas, said the full report of what work was being done was available for the public to see in libraries throughout the county.

Asked whether a decontamination chamber and blast proof doors were currently being built, he said: "I can only refer you to the report made in November and available to the public. There is no secrecy about it at all."

"Work is being done because the county council have an obligation to fulfil."