

FILE

VND

Original GR.



cc:HO Defence

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

13 May 1980

Dear Mr. Lord,

Thank you for your letter of 19 April enclosing this one from Miss Josephine Bailey of 134A Church Lane, Tooting, London, SW17 9PU, about the protection of the population in war.

I entirely agree with Miss Bailey that the prospect of a nuclear war is appalling but it is precisely to prevent another war, and hence to preserve our peace and freedom, that our defence policy is devoted. I am sure that Miss Bailey would agree that there is no more worthy aim than that.

Over the past few years the Soviet Union has been relentlessly increasing its military expenditure and military capability to a level which, unlike that of N.A.T.O., is far greater than is required for purely defensive purposes. Clearly, the Government cannot just ignore that threat. Our primary duty is, therefore, to deter any potential enemy from taking aggressive action against us, and to that end it is essential that our Armed Forces are adequately manned, equipped and trained. This is inevitably expensive, and Miss Bailey is right to refer to this, but peace has to be worked for and paid for. In the dangerous world in which we live adequate security must come first. I cannot, however, stress enough that the money devoted to defence is intended to deter aggression and to preserve peace. It is against this background that we have to consider our civil defence policy.

/ Miss Bailey

RA

Miss Bailey has reservations about protection from radioactive fallout. I am sure that the Government scientists whose work involves the study of radiation from nuclear weapons and who contribute their knowledge to the protective measures against it, would respect her reservations. However, there are limits to the usefulness of comparisons between the precautions taken in normal times to protect those who may spend their working lives in conditions which may expose them to radiation and those which would be both necessary and practicable in the event of a nuclear attack. Miss Bailey and her colleagues are quite wrong in believing that the "Protect and Survive" measures would be of little use as protection against radiation. Properly applied, they could reduce the level of radiation to only one-fortieth of that in the open and could save many millions of lives. I would mention that there is much useful information about the effects of nuclear weapons in the booklet "Nuclear Weapons" published for the Home Office by Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Although parts of it are rather technical, it does provide a great deal of helpful material in quite straightforward terms.

The estimated cost of providing domestic concrete underground shelters to only ten million homes, based on a design of which we have some knowledge, is between £60,000 million and £80,000 million. In our present examination of shelter design, mentioned in my previous letter, we shall of course be seeking designs likely to cost very much less than the one I have quoted. Local authorities have been asked to make a survey of existing buildings (including any remaining World War II shelters) which could serve as public shelter in the event of a future war.

It is of course true that we have a few buildings to house war emergency communications and small elements of government dispersed in expectation that national government would not be practicable for a while after a widespread nuclear attack. The numbers involved in these contingency arrangements are very small.

/ It is not

It is not possible to make any certain prediction of the targets which an enemy might select for any given attack. I am afraid that it has to be accepted that no part of the country could be considered safe from the direct effects of nuclear weapons and the resultant radioactive fallout. This has been seen as a serious impediment to mass evacuation schemes, and official advice for some years has been that the public should "stay put". This "stay put" policy is, however, purely advisory and there are no plans to take any action against those who choose to ignore it. We are re-appraising our attitude to public evacuation schemes in the course of our current review of civil defence arrangements.

Yours sincerely
Raymond Stobart

Tom Cox, Esq., M.P.