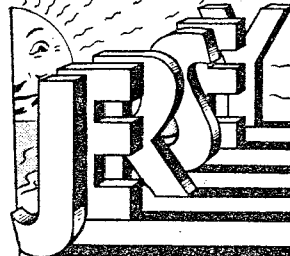


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## SHELTER FROM AIR RAIDS

### DEEP RETREATS CONDEMNED

### DISPERSAL SAFER

The report of the Lord Privy Seal's Conference on air-raid shelters was issued yesterday as a White Paper (Stationery Office, 6d. Cmd. 6006). The conference, which was convened on February 24, 1939, to advise the Lord Privy Seal on air-raid shelter policy, consisted of Lord Hailey, Mr. George Hicks, M.P., Sir Clement Hindley, Mr. F. J. Leathers, Dame Louise McLroy, Sir William McIntock, Sir Frederick Marquis, and Professor R. V. Southwell.

The report opposes the suggestion of deep or bomb-proof shelters for the whole civilian population and favours the policy of dispersed shelters. While making no recommendations about active defence, which was outside the province of the conference, the report speaks of the close inter-relation of active and passive defence, pointing out that

active defence, by keeping the enemy away from their objectives, can not only protect directly the lives of the inhabitants, but can protect also their homes and the factories, means of food-supply, public services, and the like. In proportion as more elaborate and expensive proposals for passive defence are brought forward, the question must arise more and more insistently whether craftsmanship and material resources could not better be utilized on the improvement of active defence, or in some other direction where they would better contribute to ensuring victory. It is of some significance also, as one observer impressed upon the Conference, that the public morale, during the air raids on Barcelona, was greatly sustained by the knowledge that the raiders were being actively engaged by the defending forces.

### NO FULL IMMUNITY

The problem of shelters cannot be regarded in the light of a contest between a deep shelter policy and a shallow shelter policy. The universal provision of complete immunity from risk is impossible. What has to be sought is a balanced programme of reasonable protection, bearing in mind first that the factor of time is of vital importance, and secondly that it is essential to avoid an immoderate diversion of the nation's effort from other activities directed to the maintenance of its own existence and the successful prosecution of war.

There are many regions where it should be possible to trust more to the unlikelihood of attack than to the provision of shelters, which would in such cases represent a diversion of public funds and energies from more legitimate objectives. At the other end of the scale there are certain localities which must be regarded as particularly liable to be heavily attacked, and where special measures may therefore be justified. It is necessary to aim, in general, at the provision of an equal degree of protection, by one method or another, for areas which appear to be approximately equal in their liability to danger.

the occupants of a shelter. Disasters in civil life have shown that such mass catastrophes have a far greater effect upon the public mind than a similar number of isolated casualties.

### TUNNEL DIFFICULTIES

The conference find practical difficulties which seem to them to be so great as to preclude construction of "ramified" shelters (tunnels following the lines of the streets) on anything like a large scale.

The existence of a consulting engineer tunnelling work two points seem to emerge clearly. In the first place, it may be assumed that conditions in the majority of streets in our large cities exclude the possibility, which was exploited to some extent in Barcelona, of surface working. An assortment of mains, gas, electric, and water, generally occupy the whole of the under-surface of our main streets, and below this—to a depth often exceeding 30ft.—lie the sewers. Construction must, therefore, be effected "in tunnel"—namely, by driving vertical shafts and working laterally from their bases. Extensive experience of underground railway work in London points to a very definite limit to the maximum rate at which—taking into account plant, supervisory staff, and labour—work could be carried out, even if other demands on this section of industry were substantially reduced.

The engineer referred to, addressing himself to the question of tunnels of the 12ft. diameter, for which the readily available types of excavating plant are adapted, gave it as his view that we could not confidently count upon constructing in London, within a period of two years, 16 miles of such tunnel shelters. This light of tunnel would have the capacity to house some 160,000 persons. He explained that by making tunnels of 16ft. 6in. diameter, capable of accommodating refugees on two storeys, the number of persons for whom such accommodation could be constructed in a given time would be considerably increased.

It is doubted, however, whether this expedient would be of practical value, for while a 16ft. 6in. tunnel is estimated to hold about 30,000 persons per mile, there must be few, if any, places where the corresponding concentration of population (say, 200,000 to the square mile) would be located near enough on either side of the tunnel to enable advantage to be taken of the additional accommodation so available. Indeed, a tunnel of such large capacity must approximate in character to a typical focal shelter, and be subject to the difficulties and drawbacks already shown to be associated with such shelters.

It seems clear, therefore, that the construction of tunnel shelters must, if they are to be completed in any commensurate time, be restricted in extent.

### UNDERGROUND RAILWAYS

Discussing the tunnel type, the conference refer to the London Underground Railway system, "much of which affords a high degree of protection." On this the report says:—

We doubt whether, having due regard to its extent and to the comparatively limited means of access, the system could make more than a partial contribution to the general shelter problem. It may, however, lend itself to a special use—namely, the treatment and clearance of casualties. It would seem worth consideration whether, by making additional excavations at or near existing railway stations, it would not be possible to provide protected casualty clearing stations from which evacuation of the wounded after treatment would be comparatively easy.

### DISPERSED SHELTERS

#### A RETREAT READILY AT HAND

Turning from the question of public shelters to that of dispersed shelters for the protection of people in their homes, the Conference favour the latter type as

possibility of constructing galleries or moderate-sized concrete shelters on small plots above or below ground.

The report also considers the protection to be afforded to those engaged in certain activities, the carrying on of which during raids will be of crucial importance. It recommends the provision of an adequate scale of protection for surgical services, the working of casualty clearing stations, telephonic communications, key points in the direction of active and passive defence, and the like. Special protection is also urged for key workers in essential occupations, such as workers in certain engineering works in vulnerable areas, or, again, dock or port workers; similar arguments may be applicable to some other organized units where the loss of personnel might be irreparable, for instance, surgeons in hospitals.

### THE COST

#### WARNING AGAINST UNDER-ESTIMATES

On the question of cost the report declares:—

In an issue of such vital concern to the existence of the nation the problem of cost is of relative rather than of absolute importance. The measure of justification for shelter expenditure lies in the extent to which it can contribute to the successful conclusion of the war and the preservation of the life of the nation. It must therefore be assessed in the light of the other commitments of the country for the provision of defence. We ourselves, in formulating our conclusions, have given less weight to cost as such than to other factors, such as, for instance, the period within which any given scheme of defence could be completed, or the availability of the labour and materials required.

We think it right, however, to enter a word of warning against a too ready acceptance of some of the estimates of cost which have been put forward, especially in respect of deep shelter propositions. We have good reason to believe that many of these are substantial under-estimates.

### A RAID PICTURE

Dealing with general considerations on the subject of deep shelters the report says:—

We must record our conviction that a universal provision of strongly protected public shelters would be far from making the community "100 per cent. safe." Let us consider the position of an average household on the occurrence of a raid by night. Within seven minutes of the warning every member must be safe within the public shelter. There are members of the family to be awakened, the need for finding and putting on warm clothes, gas to be cut off, and perhaps stairs to be gone down; then a journey through black or very faintly illuminated streets, jostling with other refugees in various states of excitement or even panic.

When the shelter is successfully reached and entered—and not all will be successful—there is still the discomfort of being packed among a mass of strangers, some of whom will be temperamentally less stable than others. This is not, we think, an unfair portrayal of the consequences of policy based upon the movement of large numbers from their homes to public shelters. It is, moreover, a scene which might have to be re-enacted night after night.

It is not to be supposed that air raids can take place without great dislocation of the life of the community and we think that the ordinary citizen will realize this. But we believe that most British citizens would prefer to count upon a less effective protection at their homes, even though this may make no pretence of warding off direct or near hits of bombs, if they can be safeguarded against the one danger which must loom largest in their minds—namely, that of being themselves, or seeing

## LONDON FARES INQUIRY

### "TAKING A RISK" ON PUBLIC SUPPORT

#### MR. PICK'S EVIDENCE

When the Railway Rates Tribunal resumed its inquiry yesterday into the application of the railway companies and the London Passenger Transport Board for increased charging powers in the London suburban area, Mr. Frank Pick, vice-chairman of the L.P.T.B., was further cross-examined by Mr. S. E. Pocock, on behalf of Surrey ratepayers' organizations and Essex local authorities. Mr. W. Bruce Thomas, K.C., presided.

Questioned about the Board's £2,455,000 renewal fund, Mr. Pick said that obsolescence was not regular, but was often accidental. Station buildings might have a physical life of 99 years, but actually many lasted only 30 years; the Board had been rebuilding stations all over London. He did not agree that the Board should have allocated less money to the renewal fund to pay interest on "C" stock.

Quoting from *The Times* of May 6, 1937, Mr. Pocock referred to the evidence of Lord Ashfield, chairman of the Board, at the omnibus strike inquiry. The application, if granted, said Mr. Pocock, would result in an estimated addition of £664,000 to revenue, but in 1937 Lord Ashfield said he doubted if any substantial increase could be obtained by raising fares, and any alteration might have a dangerous effect on revenue.

Mr. Pick—It is clear that any attempt to raise the general level of fares might not be advantageous to us and we have refrained from that. We have looked on this as a matter of equalization of fares.

#### OVERCROWDING PROBLEM

He admitted that they were trying to extract more money from the public, and said they would not be doing their duty if they did not. Income must be expanded.

Mr. Pocock.—Is it physically possible to get more money out of the public?—It is a risk we have to take.

Whatever the position was in 1937, the chances of getting money out of the public have not improved to-day? I would not say the position is worse. From what *The Times* said on Monday I should regard it as favourable.

Mr. Pick agreed that overcrowding was straining the goodwill of the public. They wanted to maintain their goodwill. It was practically impossible to lift all the traffic in the two peaks at 8.30 and 9 a.m. at Morden tube station, but the Southern Railway could not give relief owing to the physical limitations of their tracks and terminals. Overcrowding on the Romford and Dagenham lines would be remedied in 1940 by electrification, and there would be double the accommodation.

Mr. Pocock.—In the meantime would it not be advisable to postpone the increase of fares?—We must have an immediate increase of revenue to meet the extra capital charges.

Mr. JACKSON WOLFE, on behalf of the Kent Federation of Ratepayers, opposing the proposed Southern Railway fare increases only, also brought up the matter of overcrowding. Mr. Pick agreed that there was certain overcrowding at midday and that some people took first-class tickets to secure a seat. The Board was trying to eliminate first-class, except for long distances.



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