

# The Beeb and the Bomb

DETAILED government plans for control of the press and broadcasting services in a pre-war crisis have recently been spelt out by a Central Office of Information official.

According to Pat Abbott of the COI, writing in *Fission Fragments*, a magazine for government scientists, the government intends to 'keep people informed, advised and motivated' even though 'a full-scale nuclear assault on the United Kingdom with its widespread death, destruction and injury will almost certainly knock out central government as we know it'.

Two wartime committees will be set up under a government minister responsible for information policy. A 'standing committee on information policy' will issue instructions to the public and the Prime Minister's press secretary would direct a press working party, housed close to Downing Street, involving BBC and

IBA representatives.

The article is coy about arrangements for censorship, although, in fact, censorship directions would be a principal task for both committees. But it reveals that the government has prepared master copies of 30 official announcements on available emergency powers, including mobilisation, and manpower controls. (i.e. military and industrial conscription). Mr Abbott acknowledges that before a nuclear attack, all TV and radio stations would close down and a single national radio channel, the Wartime Broadcasting Service, would take over. It would be run by specially selected BBC staff, using a network of fallout protected transmitters.

But this policy may be revised to keep light entertainment on television in 'an attenuated form' until the bomb drops. After that, COI staff will have 'a good opportunity to exercise our ingenuity' in running and information service, designed 'to counter rumour and sustain law and order'.

**Duncan Campbell**