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So sieht ein Engländer das Zivilschutzproblem

When the Civil Defence was disbanded in 1968, nearly all interest was lost by the public in any form of a defence programme including shelters. In the early fifties a number of shelters for Regional Government were established, these were situated throughout the U.K. and were manned by the emergency planning officer, who was the principal, and members of both Military and Civil personnel, mostly Civil Servants. The reason for these regional shelters was, that in the event of a war they would take complete charge of that district. It is certain that none of these shelters would have reached anything like the Swiss standard of acceptance, some were well-protected but most mainly consisted of basements in the town-halls with no consideration for blast protection or proper ventilation, hence the very recent declaration by the British Government by giving forty-five million pounds for Civil

Defence, and it is assumed that most of this money will be spent on updating these regional shelters. Since Russia raided Afghanistan great pressure has been put on the Government by the press, television and thousands of letters written by the public demanding that something should be done about our complete lack of defence, and in this time, mostly during the last nine months, several hundred builders have drawn their attention to the possibilities of underground shelters. Unfortunately, however, as many non-builders have also drawn their attention this way, i.e. antique dealers, double glazing manufacturers, farmers and umpteen other people have jumped on the bandwagon. We call most of these "Cowboys".

Concrete shelters, metal shelters, wooden shelters, aluminium shelters, brick shelters and even plastic shelters are being offered with prices from £1,000 to a luxury underground shelter of £40,000, for an average family of 4 or 5. Many of the shelters being offered are of high class quality, but many of the shelters being offered would be dangerous, as some have no ventilation plants, merely a breathing pipe, some would flood due to high water levels, and it is certain that some people would die in peace-time let alone in war if this malpractice is allowed to continue. We are, at pre-

sent, awaiting recommendations from the Home Office and it is promised, that some will be issued towards the end of this year.

The Swiss and Swedish concepts have been well-publicized by the television and the public in this country are gradually becoming aware of what should be the accepted level, but in the end it is a question of money, as little or no advance will be given to the public as the Government would appear to be attempting to up-date world war two shelters which consisted of galvanized steel bunkers, half underground or reinforced steel type cages within the house, stacked with sandbags.

In conclusion it is a question of whether each family can afford to either build or purchase a shelter themselves and to build a shelter with adequate protection would cost at least £3,000 and more possibly £6,000, as the latter figure is approximately the average salary per year for the working man, movement will be very slow and unless, of course, 1. money is made available as a subsidy from the Government, or 2. the public are convinced of the absolute urgency for the proper shelters. One of the gimmicks being offered at present is that for the price of an average family car you could have a shelter.

Maybe this is the right approach. SP

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