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SHELTER POLICY

Memorandum by the Minister of Works

The Defence Committee on 30th March, 1953 asked me to try and persuade applicants for building licences for four-storey and higher buildings to include in their plans a strengthened basement adequate for use as an air-raid shelter. I have no powers to compel a building owner to do this.

2. Persuasion has succeeded in the majority of cases, but since the explosion on 1st March of the hydrogen bomb some owners do not think the extra expense is worth incurring. The new buildings are needed and the licences ought to be given. But when I grant them it is fairly certain that the policy of persuasion will no longer be effective.

3. Accordingly, if it is still thought that strengthened basements are essential I must ask for compulsory powers. It is unlikely that these could be obtained unless the Government agreed to make grants to cover the cost of the shelters. This might run into £10 millions a year, or even more if flats are included.

4. The Ministerial Committee on Civil Defence considered the question on 12th April and thought that compulsory powers could not be contemplated. As this would mean that the construction of shelters for the public would more or less cease, I was asked to bring the matter to the Cabinet.

D. E.

Ministry of Works, S.E.1.

13th April, 1954.