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CIVIL DEFENCE (No. 4)

AFTER A RAID IS OVER

[This is the fourth of a series of BBC talks by Wing-Commander P. I. Hodsoll, C.B., Inspector-General of Home Security. These talks are broadcast by the main NBS stations at 6.30 p.m. on Wednesday evenings.]

AN organisation to deal with post-raid problems is an essential part of civil defence. This side of the work really begins during the raid, when rest centres should be opened to provide plenty of shelter for people who've been rendered homeless. The main objects of the post-raid organisation are to look after people whose homes have been damaged or destroyed, to re-house them, to provide them with emergency clothing, and money, and to meet the hundred and one needs of people who may have lost everything they possess in a matter perhaps of a few seconds. These requirements call into play a good many business organisations. It's most important that they should be co-ordinated under one head, working best with a small committee.

I need hardly add that people who've been affected by a raid need most sympathetic handling and that it's of first importance that they should be able to get all their cares and troubles dealt with at one place.

First Things First

As soon as possible after a bad raid the authorities concerned hold a meeting, review the damage done and its effect from information supplied by the civil defence controller. Officials should be present who should report how their services are affected and to what extent the damage affects other people, another most important point. The object of this committee is firstly to get information from those concerned, find out from them how long it will take to restore the situation, and what, if any, help they want. Special attention is paid to the needs of war industry and to the restoration of production with the utmost speed. The question of priority is most important. The meeting of this committee should be brief and it can continue to meet daily until the situation is cleared up or sufficiently in hand to make further meetings unnecessary. It may happen that large areas are without means of cooking owing to damage to water, electricity or gas supply. Arrangements for providing food must be worked out beforehand and be available, and some form of communal cooking or feeding arrangements may be necessary as a temporary measure.

The whole object of these post-raid activities is the restoration of the situation as quickly as possible, and particularly to see that the civil population can be got back into its homes or can be accommodated elsewhere and can be looked after, no matter what the difficulties. The importance of this side of the work being carefully planned beforehand and working smoothly cannot be over-estimated. Information should be given to everyone through a warden or by other means, so that they will know where they can go to get help and the sort of help that will be available. Failure of this side may affect the morale of the population quicker than almost anything else.

Central Control is Vital

The operation of the civil defence services must be under central control. The importance of this will be obvious when I say that there must be one place which

has the complete picture of the raid and which can dispose its available forces in accordance with the greatest need.

For cities or areas of population up to 100,000 we in Britain have one control, and over that we have an additional sub-control for every extra 100,000. In charge of the main control is a controller, and he has with him the heads of the various services or their deputies, that is, the rescue party service, first-aid service and so on. Wardens' reports go direct to the control section. They don't ask for any specified number of services to be sent, but just report the situation, and the controller in consultation with the head of the service or services concerned orders out the necessary force from the nearest depot with which he should be in direct communication.

Where's there's a sub-control as well, the sub-controller has a certain number of forces under his control which he operates just as I've described, but keeps the main controller informed of his position. If the situation gets beyond the sub-controller's resources, then he applies to the main control for help.

The main control keeps a map on which is recorded all the damage reported and a tally board is also kept which shows the services available in the various depots, and also indicates what services have been sent out and to which incident. Every incident that comes in is given a consecutive number, so that everything associated with it can be recorded together. If communications break down messengers must be available. They can be provided with bicycles or cars or can be just runners.

It's very important that there should be an alternative to the main control or to any sub-control in case these should be damaged or destroyed, or have to be evacuated. We've had a good deal of experience of this sort of thing and it's of vital importance that central control is kept going by hook or by crook, otherwise the services are liable to be dispersed all over the place, and it's impossible to control the situation properly.

The alternative should always be manned during a raid and keep a picture of the situation. This will enable continuity to be maintained. It's very important to have continual practice in receiving and writing messages. Messages must be kept short and concise and this can only be done by constant practice.

If for any reason control has been lost it may be necessary to authorise wardens to order out services direct from depots. But control must be kept informed by whatever means are available of what has happened. Normally we don't allow wardens to order services out for the very good reason that control would be rapidly lost and the forces might not be used to the best advantage. This is particularly important if they are limited in number. Fire services in this country have their own control. There are advantages in having controls combined, and in any case the very closest touch must be maintained between the two services, because their operations vitally affect each other.

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