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Fighting "Don't Know, Don't Care": The FCDA's Public Education Quest

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FIGHTING "DON'T KNOW, DON'T CARE":
THE FCDA'S PUBLIC EDUCATION QUEST

by

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B.A. June 1998, Washington and Jefferson College

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ABSTRACT

FIGHTING “DON’T KNOW, DON’T CARE”: THE FCDA’S PUBLIC EDUCATION QUEST

Rachel M. Mihalovich
Old Dominion University, 2001
Director: Dr. Lorraine M. Lees

The Federal Civil Defense Administration (FCDA) was created in December 1950 to prepare the civilian population of the United States to survive and recover from a nuclear attack by the Soviet Union and its allies. Contemporary civil defense theory dictated that this goal should be met by educating the American public in order to avoid a negative psychological reaction that would prevent survival and recovery. In order to evaluate the success of the FCDA’s civil defense program, this study will investigate the composition of the FCDA and its public education program.

This study utilized several types of sources in evaluating the educational efforts of the FCDA. The FCDA’s Annual Reports provided detailed information about how its public education program was structured. Several secondary sources, especially Guy Oakes’s The Imaginary War: Civil Defense and American Cold War Culture, demonstrated the psychological reasoning behind civil defense theory. Finally, newspaper and magazine articles and public polling data showed how the public reacted to the FCDA’s public education program.

These sources revealed that the FCDA began a massive public education program that lasted throughout the organization’s lifetime. Through its booklets, manuals, pamphlets, television and radio programs, film strips, press releases, affiliation with national organizations and special programs, the FCDA communicated information to the

civilian population about the dangers of nuclear weapons and methods of self-protection. Polling data revealed that the number of people who knew about nuclear weapons and self-protection significantly increased throughout the early years of the FCDA.

Though the FCDA was unable to ensure that the civilian population would be able to survive and recover from an attack, it did organize and implement a successful civil defense public education program. Thus it accomplished the goal of educating the civilian population stipulated in early civil defense theory.

This thesis is dedicated to all those
who still choose to continue on and to
those who still love them despite this. It
is also dedicated to Snoopy.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

One of the most under-researched topics of the Cold War in the United States concerns the plans and preparations that were made to protect the civilian population from a nuclear strike by the Soviet Union and its communist allies. Civil defense seems only to be a topic for those who were school children during the first decade of nuclear threat, who recounted to the next generation humorous stories of practicing civil defense, invariably including the “duck and cover” tale. The reason why so many remember tales like these is evidence of the success of civil defense in the 1950s in the United States. Today, though a few historians have attempted to try to place tales like this into the political and social context of the fifties, we can still pause and wonder who came up with such a ludicrous plan that seems well beyond the realm of common sense. Of course, evaluating events of fifty years ago by today’s standards is never a sound historical undertaking.

The first United States government agency that attempted to design many programs that were specifically dedicated to the safety of the civilian population was the Federal Civil Defense Administration (FCDA), which existed from 1951-1958. This study is an investigation and evaluation of the FCDA and its civil defense planning. In order to evaluate the FCDA, this study will focus on the FCDA’s public education program. This was the one program that least depended on Congressional support, which

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the FCDA lacked consistently throughout its existence. This study will show that the FCDA, while unable to guarantee the safety of any civilians, successfully surmounted the constraints placed upon it to plan for national survival of a nuclear attack. The FCDA was able to do what several studies revealed was most important for civil defense planning in the United States: to educate the public.

While some historians have written on aspects of civil defense during the Cold War, none have specifically discussed the institution of civil defense or how it functioned; instead, studies relating to civil defense have regarded it as simply a tool of foreign policy officials or as an intruder that invaded the lives of ordinary citizens. No study has focused on the FCDA. The most recent study relating to civil defense is Laura McEnaney's Civil Defense Begins at Home: Militarization Meets Everyday Life in the Fifties.¹ McEnaney only briefly discussed the organization and implementation of civil defense; as her title suggests, she instead focused on how the lives of the nuclear family, women and ethnic minorities were affected by civil defense. This aspect was useful in assessing how people responded to the FCDA's programs and Congressional support, as well as why women were inclined to support civil defense. The most useful aspect of McEnaney's study was her analysis of the origins of the FCDA, which included information on Congressional thinking and civil defense theory.

Another study that was a valuable resource for appraising the success of the FCDA's education program was Guy Oakes's The Imaginary War: Civil Defense and

¹Laura McEnaney, Civil Defense Begins at Home: Militarization Meets Everyday Life in the Fifties (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

American Cold War Culture.² In it, Oakes explained the civil defense institution as a device instilling and sustaining what he called a “Cold War ethic.” As a sociologist, Oakes saw the management of nuclear fears, along with the conception of preparedness as a new civic duty, as constituting the “Cold War ethic”: a way for policy makers to ensure the public was willing to risk nuclear war in order to have its foreign policy goals met. Oakes’s study was extremely useful because of his analysis of the psychological reasoning behind civil defense theory and the management of nuclear terror, as well as how the FCDA applied this to its public education program.

Allan M. Winkler, in Life Under a Cloud: American Anxiety about the Atom, focused his attention on the advent of a United States nuclear strategy without an accompanying overhaul of foreign policy.³ His main thesis illustrated the discord between fears of nuclear destruction and a lack of success in bringing nuclear weapons under effective control measures. Winkler saw the institution of civil defense as one of several reasons for this, as well as shifting public attention towards anti-communism.

As a result of the lack of any secondary study dedicated to how the federal government dealt with the new, overwhelming threat to the civilian population of the United States and its territories and possessions, it is necessary to rely heavily on primary material to flesh out the formal organization of civil defense. There were several key primary sources that made that possible. The first was the “Federal Civil Defense Act of 1950” itself which created the FCDA and outlined its responsibilities and duties as

²Guy Oakes, The Imaginary War: Civil Defense and American Cold War Culture, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

³Allan M. Winkler, Life Under a Cloud: American Anxiety about the Atom, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

related to civil defense.⁴ This statute also settled several disputes concerning how civil defense should be organized and who should control it. Other primary source documents included the eight Annual Reports of the Federal Civil Defense Administration.⁵ These reports detailed civil defense planning, studies, programs, expenditures, goals and accomplishments, as well as the Administrator's assessment of civil defense.

This study, however, is not limited to a simple institutional history of the FCDA and its public education program, but will include an evaluation and explanation of the successes and failures of that institution's public education program. For this purpose, in addition to the secondary sources first discussed, the 1950s contemporary press (newspapers, news magazines, and popular magazines) provided an unmistakable picture of how well the civilian population accepted the FCDA's programs and advice, as well as how the FCDA lost public confidence. Information provided in George H. Gallup's The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1935-1971 and an anthology of other public opinion polls on atomic weapons and nuclear energy by Hazel Gaudet Erskine in Public Opinion Quarterly served as additional proof of this.⁶

⁴"Federal Civil Defense Act of 1950", reprinted in U.S., Federal Civil Defense Administration, Annual Report for 1951 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1952), 89-105.

⁵U.S., Federal Civil Defense Administration, Annual Reports, 1951-1958 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office 1952-1959). (Hereafter cited as Annual Report by date.)

⁶George H. Gallup, The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1935-1971, vol. 2, 1949-1958 (New York: Random House, 1972); Hazel Gaudet Erskine, "The Polls: Atomic Weapons and Nuclear Energy," Public Opinion Quarterly 27 (Summer 1963): 154-190.

CHAPTER II

THE NEED FOR CIVIL DEFENSE

As tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States continued to escalate after World War II, the United States was able to remain confident in its military strength. It was the only nation in the world which possessed an atomic weapon, although the actual store of atomic bombs the United States possessed consisted of only two by the end of 1945. By mid-1948, that number had increased to fifty; however, the devices were unassembled – it took two days to assemble one – which eliminated their use in a quick response action. The United States, despite these undisclosed limitations, saw the bomb as an essential counter to the land-based strength of the Soviet Union. According to the newly formed United States Central Intelligence Agency, the Soviet Union would not be capable of detonating an atomic device until 1953, 1951 at the absolute earliest. As others pushed the date even further away, everyone assumed that the Soviet Union was too technologically backward to obtain the necessary materials to design and build the device in the near future.¹

Another important factor in the atomic rubric was the issue of control. After many scientists who had worked on the Manhattan Project saw the destruction inflicted in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, they quickly called for the implementation of a set of international controls to guard the use of atomic energy. Scientists with ties to the development of the atomic bomb, such as Niels Bohr, Leo Szilard, Albert Einstein, Edward Teller and Robert Oppenheimer, felt that they had a special perspective with

¹Winkler, Life Under a Cloud, 61, 66-67.

respect to atomic energy. After their realization of the power they created, many spoke publicly about the dangers of atomic weapons and the possible extinction of humankind. They foresaw a dangerous arms race developing if the United States did not do something to prevent it. The scientists advocated sharing the secrets of atomic energy with the world to ease tensions and promote a peaceful world order before the inevitable discovery of it by another nation.²

Most Americans and politicians, however, felt that the United States should guard its nuclear secret. Winkler cited a September 1945 Gallup poll where seventy-one percent of Americans surveyed wanted the United States to retain control over the bomb, while only fourteen percent of those surveyed wanted to place it in the hands of the United Nations.³

Yet the process of developing international controls for atomic energy failed for several reasons. Few nations were willing to accept a pledge by the United States to forego the use of nuclear weapons in exchange for not developing one themselves, since that would leave the United States as the sole nuclear power. Even if that agreement would be reached, policing it would be a difficult task. To this end, the United States proposal for the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission, stemming from a recommendation by Dean Acheson and David Lilienthal, advocated a series of steps that involved surveying for materials and ended with destruction of existing bombs, to be enforced by inspections. The United States proposal also removed the veto right of Security Council members with regard to enforcement. The Soviets found this to be

²*Ibid.*, 34-42.

³*Ibid.*, 45-46.

unacceptable; the United States would not agree to the self-policing alternative proposed by the Soviets.⁴

The United States perception of its own security was suddenly and dramatically changed by the Soviets' detonation of an atomic device 29 August 1949. While the United States was still in the process of determining how to integrate atomic weapons into its military planning, it faced having to defend against them. With the intensification of the conflict in Korea, came growing fears of Soviet capabilities. Convinced that possession of the bomb had led to Soviet aggression in Korea, many Americans feared the Soviets might join in the conflict, and this brought with it fears of an attack on the United States involving nuclear weapons. It was in this atmosphere that the Truman administration created a federal agency that would protect Americans on the home front.

The task of protecting Americans' lives and property in the United States during the 1950s was the greatest civil defense challenge that the United States government had ever faced. Geography, technology and military science had historically protected most of the United States from invasion by its enemies. The first modern civil defense program in the United States did not even begin until World War I. However, it was not until the end of the 1940s that civil defense played an important part in national security planning. Advances in the destructiveness of weapons and the ability to deliver them made all regions of the United States suddenly susceptible to attack. Prior to that point, civil defense efforts in the United States were little concerned with the major issues that have plagued civil defense planners since.

During World War I, approximately 12,000 state and local civil defense councils

⁴*Ibid.*, 48-53.

had been established. Initially the councils were created erratically after April 1917 by states in connection with the declaration of war. The councils later fell under the direction of the Secretary of Interior, who headed the Field Division of the National Defense Council, created on 1 October 1918. These councils were more concerned with supporting the armed forces than with directly protecting the civilian sector. The councils handled issues relating to morale, conservation of food and resources, and assimilating aliens. After the war ended, these councils too demobilized.⁵

In May 1940, President Franklin Roosevelt revived the National Defense Council and in August he requested the defunct civil defense councils be revived. He also created a new federal organization which would coordinate these councils, the Division of State and Local Cooperation of the Advisory Commission to the National Defense Council. In May 1940, Roosevelt created the Office of Civilian Defense (OCD) to replace it.

Neal Fitzsimons, who was a civil engineer and member of the engineering staff of the FCDA and later Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization, and who wrote a brief account of civil defense history, suggested that the timing of the creation of the OCD was related to the damage the German Luftwaffe was delivering to the civilian population in Great Britain. In its first year of existence, Fiorello LaGuardia, legendary mayor of New York City, served as OCD director. Although he did not heed Roosevelt's urging that civil defense be directed at protecting the nation from foreign sabotage and ensuring all communities worked hard and wasted little, LaGuardia did begin to investigate the actual

⁵Donald W. Mitchell, Civil Defense: Planning for Survival and Recovery, (Washington, DC: Industrial College of the Armed Forces, 1966), 19; Neal Fitzsimons, "Brief History of American Civil Defense," in Eugene P. Wigner, ed., Who Speaks for Civil Defense? (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968), 30.

protection problems that civilians would face in the event of an attack. His OCD even had ready and issued immediately after the Pearl Harbor invasion information about how to protect oneself in the event of an air attack.⁶

The OCD, however, was not a successful organization. Under LaGuardia's leadership, the OCD suffered from a scandal that caused it to lose the public's confidence. This scandal dealt with his appointment on 22 September 1941 of Eleanor Roosevelt as an assistant director for nonprotective areas of civil defense and her appointment of a Hollywood actor, Melvyn Douglas, and a Broadway dancer, Mayvis Chaney, to the staff. While their roles were supposed to be related to physical fitness, actors and dancers were not respectable enough to be part of such a serious federal program.⁷

The Office of Civilian Defense limped through World War II. A combination of the loss of the public's confidence and the fact that German and Japanese air power was insufficient to reach the United States after the summer of 1942 left the OCD undeveloped. On 30 June 1945 President Harry S. Truman abolished this organization. The end of the war and demobilization swept away concerns of civil defense for the time being.⁸

On 25 November 1946, Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson created the Civil Defense Board to study the civil defense problem left by the abolition of Office of Civilian Defense. Major General Harold Bull headed the board, and its report three

⁶Fitzsimons, "Brief History of American Civil Defense," 31-32.

⁷*Ibid.*, 32.

⁸*Ibid.*, 32-33.

months later in February 1947 recommended the creation of a separate civil defense agency and planted the seeds for the idea of self-help. The new agency would report directly to the proposed Secretary of Defense, but would relieve the army of its responsibility for civil defense.⁹

Following the unification of the armed services in the Department of Defense (DOD), the Secretary of Defense, James Forrestal, created the Office of Civil Defense Planning (OCDP) on 27 March 1948. Forrestal charged the OCDP Director, Russell Hopley, to determine who was responsible for civil defense and how it should be organized. The Hopley Report, released 1 October 1948, also recommended that a separate national office of civil defense be created.¹⁰

President Truman, however, pushed aside the recommendations of both the Bull Report and the Hopley Report. He finally placed the responsibility of planning for civilian defense with the National Security Resources Board (NSRB), which had been created 26 July 1947 by the National Security Act of 1947 to coordinate all nonmilitary aspects of defense. The NSRB assumed these responsibilities on 3 March 1949.¹¹

The prevailing feeling that civil defense was not an urgent matter quickly changed. Historian Laura McEnaney discussed the explosion of a Soviet nuclear device as part of a triple threat which created an urgent push for a more serious civil defense

⁹Fitzsimons, "Brief History of American Civil Defense," 33-35; Allan M. Winkler, "A 40-year History of Civil Defense," Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists 40 (June-July 1984): 17; Oakes, The Imaginary War, 36-37.

¹⁰Fitzsimons, "Brief History of American Civil Defense," 33-35; Guy Oakes, The Imaginary War, 37.

¹¹Fitzsimons, "Brief History of American Civil Defense," 35; Oakes, The Imaginary War, 37-38.

program; the other two threats came from Chinese communism and the intensification of conflict in Korea. A third recommendation was put to Truman for an independent agency to handle matters of civil defense in September 1950, this time by the new director of the NSRB, W. Stuart Symington, in what was known as the "Blue Book." On 1 December 1950, Truman issued executive order 10186 creating the Federal Civil Defense Administration (FCDA), shortly followed by Congressional approval on 12 January 1951.¹²

The Federal Civil Defense Act of 1950 (FCD Act), Public Law 920 of the 81st Congress, was a significant piece of legislation. Though amended in 1958 when replacing the FCDA with the Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization, the FCD Act was the first substantial attempt by the federal government to deal with civilian defense in terms of the nuclear age. Moreover it set the tone for how well civil defense would function, or not function, based on popular national support well into the future. It also answered, at least temporarily, several pressing questions about civil defense.

The primary purpose of the FCD Act was "to provide a plan of civil defense for the protection of life and property in the United States from attack." No small task, it was clearly stated that ". . . this responsibility for civil defense shall be vested primarily in the several States and their political subdivisions. The Federal Government shall provide necessary coordination and guidance; shall be responsible for the operations of the Federal Civil Defense Administration as set forth in this act; and shall provide necessary assistance hereinafter authorized."¹³

¹²McEnaney, *Civil Defense Begins at Home*, 15; Oakes, *The Imaginary War*, 38.

¹³"Federal Civil Defense Act of 1950," 90.

This initial declaration in the FCD Act placed the primary responsibility for the protection of the civil population and property not in the federal government, but in the state and local governments. This was the dominant feature of the FCDA. It in itself was not responsible for recruiting, organizing, and preparing civil defense volunteers. It was not responsible for stockpiling, maintaining or updating supplies, though it did do that with medical supplies. It was not responsible for conducting drills or enforcing public compliance. The responsibility of the FCDA was to support, encourage and lead.

Some, such as New York City Mayor Vincent Impellitteri, came before the Senate Subcommittee hearing on the FCD Act chiding this concept as beyond the capability of cities and states, but many, like those in Congress and the White House, felt that the civil defense program, though part of national security, could not be shouldered by the federal government. President Truman agreed that state and local governments should have the majority of the responsibility because federal planning and implementation of programs on these levels would be a usurpation of the power of state and local governments. Congress agreed with this, as did President Dwight D. Eisenhower, but a push to keep spending down, especially on programs other than active defense, was the driving motivation to support state and local responsibility. Too much spending on areas such as this could easily burden the federal government financially, even to the point of economic collapse.¹⁴

Oakes explained this principle of self-help, preached throughout the fifties, as a

¹⁴U.S., Congress, Senate, Subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Services, Federal Civil Defense Act of 1950, part 2: Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Services (81st Cong., 2nd sess., December 6-15, 1950), 179-185; McEnaney, Civil Defense Begins at Home, 21-22.

representation of American values at the time. A distaste for the remnants of the welfare state and a sharp distaste for communism blended together to glorify the idea of self-help and volunteerism. The FCDA would try to capitalize on this concept during its eight years. It worked hard to persuade Americans that the United States was a place where, in the words of President Truman: “Fortunately, civil defense is in the American tradition, dating back to the frontier days when all members of every family had a task to do in defending their homes and their stockades from marauding savages.”¹⁵

In her analysis, McEnaney first pointed to the history of self-help during World War I and II when locally directed volunteer councils ran programs designed to build morale. Another reason for the self-help principle was so that citizens did not come to expect the government to protect and care for everyone during and after an attack. This kept the government from having to promise the impossible: keeping everyone safe. In addition, if people did not expect the government to protect them, they might be more likely to practice civil defense.¹⁶

Under Title I, Section 101 of Public Law 902, the FCDA was established within the executive branch of government, where its “Administrator shall perform his functions subject to the direction and control of the President.” The FCDA Administrator was to be “appointed from civilian life by the President,” subject to approval by the senate. The original senate proposal had not specified that the administrator be appointed from

¹⁵Oakes, The Imaginary War, 3-6; U.S., President, Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States (Washington, DC: Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Service, 1966), Harry S. Truman, 1952-1953, 26. (Hereafter cited as Public Papers, by name and date.)

¹⁶McEnaney, Civil Defense Begins at Home, 23-24.

civilian life. There were two main reasons for this important change. First, the military was not interested in bearing this extra burden. Their job was to handle matters of “active” defense: training soldiers, protecting strategic military areas, and fighting the enemy. “Passive” defense would take away from their primary responsibility. Colonel Barnet W. Beers, Assistant for Civil Defense Liaison to the Secretary of Defense, stated before the Senate hearings on the FCD Act in December 1950, that the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not want civilian defense to be the responsibility of the military. Moreover, “the feeling in military circles, the military thinking, even below the level of the administrative office of the Secretary of Defense, is that they have got enough to do as it is.”¹⁷

The other important reason the FCDA was to be controlled by a civilian was tied into the American tradition of civilian control of the military. If the military was charged with the responsibility of preparing each individual citizen to survive a nuclear attack, too much power, feared some, would be placed in the hands of the military. Also, the United States might start looking like a paramilitary state, instead of one which aimed to stop the spread of such states. As McEnaney pointed out, it was a struggle with the question of the degree of preparedness Americans could endure and in what form. She summarized the basic thoughts of civilian civil defense planners by saying “. . . they believed the most effective civil defense system would borrow the military’s technical data and disciplinary ethic but reject its formal hierarchies and jurisdiction.”¹⁸

¹⁷“Federal Civil Defense Act of 1950,” 91-92; Senate, Subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Services, Federal Civil Defense Act of 1950, part 1, 80.

¹⁸McEnaney, Civil Defense Begins at Home, 16-17.

Section 102 of Title I provided for a formal Civil Defense Advisory Council where the Administrator served as chairman. The twelve other members of the board were also to be appointed by the president and reflected the responsibility that state and local governments had in civil defense. Three of the members were to be “representative of State governments, three members shall be representative of the political subdivisions of the States and remaining shall be selected among the citizens of the United States of broad and varied experience in matters affecting the public interest.” The Council was to meet at least once a year to advise the Administrator. This same section also authorized the Administrator to create any other councils helpful to the program.¹⁹

In addition to being headed by a civilian with access to a permanent advisory panel, the FCD Act of 1950 directed the administrator to “employ civilian personnel for duty in the United States.” It went further to specify to not “exceed twenty-five retired personnel of the armed services on a full- or part-time basis,” with certain exceptions relating to compensation. According to the FCD Act of 1950, voluntary or non-compensated personnel were allowed to be utilized, with those on the State level being organized into the United States Civil Defense Corps.²⁰

The FCD Act of 1950 authorized the civilian who headed the FCDA to perform several broad functions, which were actually looked upon by the FCDA as the “Principal responsibilities of the Administrator under this Act.” Though these may appear to give a great deal of responsibility to the administrator, his duties, when weighed against all of the civil defense preparations needed to prepare the United States and its territories, were

¹⁹“Federal Civil Defense Act of 1950,” 92.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 101.

manageable. Most of them were delegated to either the regular or branch offices of the FCDA, its advisory councils or other agencies and departments of the federal government. An executive order in 1952 and a delegations program approved by Eisenhower in 1954 strengthened the FCDA's use of experienced personnel of other federal agencies and departments.²¹

Under Title II, Section 201 of the FCD Act of 1950, the responsibilities included: "preparing national plans and programs for the civil defense of the United States" and assigning various civil defense responsibilities to the various federal agencies and departments. The program of coordinating with existing agencies and departments was something the FCDA did often, "so that the maximum use may be made of the existing facilities and resources of the Government."²²

In this same section, the Administrator was also charged with preparing a civil defense communications system, which could also provide advanced warning to the civilian population in case of an attack. In addition, he was assigned to "study and develop civil defense measures designed to afford adequate protection of life and property," as well as train citizens in civil defense organization, operation and procedures and disseminate pertinent information to the public.²³

Another responsibility of the Administrator was to obtain "civil defense materials and facilities," though all land needed to be acquired by 1 January 1952 or receive Congressional approval for the acquisition. Along with making matching funds

²¹Annual Report for 1956, 1; Annual Report for 1952, 105; Annual Report for 1954, 259-262.

²²"Federal Civil Defense Act of 1950," 93-94, 25.

available to states to acquire civil defense material and facilities, he was to encourage states to enter into interstate compacts with regard to civil defense. This was covered again in Section 203, where the Administrator was charged with giving “all practicable assistance to States in arranging, through the Department of State, mutual civil defense aid between the States and neighboring countries.”²⁴

In the event of an actual attack or approaching attack, Title III of the FCD Act of 1950 specified the emergency powers of the Administrator, as well as how those powers would be enacted and terminated. An emergency period, which must be proclaimed by the President or by a concurrent resolution of Congress and terminated by one of the same methods, would have existed if an attack on the United States had occurred or was anticipated and national safety was threatened. During such a period, the President was authorized under Section 302 to direct “any Federal department or agency” to make available: “(a.) their personnel, materials and facilities to the Administrator for the aid of the states; (b.) emergency shelter by construction or otherwise. . . .” and (c.) equipment necessary to restore or provide essential services that would aid in restoring communications and utilities, as well as replacing the same, along with hospitals and transportation facilities.²⁵

Section 303 stated that the Administrator also was given the authority to coordinate the relief activities of the various federal departments and agencies. He was also permitted to reimburse states for their employees and materials which were used to

²³*Ibid.*, 93-94.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 94, 96.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 97-98.

aid areas outside their borders in a manner related to civil defense during an emergency, as well as “hire temporary employees as needed without regard to the civil service laws.” In addition, the FCDA was authorized to “provide financial assistance for the temporary relief or aid of any civilian injured or in want as the result of any attack.”²⁶

The FCD Act of 1950 set forth these responsibilities, duties, and powers for the FCDA and FCDA Administrator as a guideline as to how civil defense in the United States should function. However, the FCD Act of 1950 alone was not enough to create an effective civil defense program. Many other factors, including funding, organization, planning and popular and political support would determine the degree of success this endeavor could achieve. As the FCDA worked within the FCD Act of 1950, it worked to create the first comprehensive, federally sponsored civil defense program in the United States.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 98-99.

CHAPTER III

STARTING THE CIVIL DEFENSE PROGRAM

While the FCDA had received its power from the FCD Act of 1950, it was dependent on Congress for its basic need: funding. While the history of budget requests and subsequent appropriations, or lack thereof, could serve to reflect the popular mood in most periods of United States history, the history of budget requests was an even more glaring example of sentiments concerning civil defense. Though the executive office and Congress felt that civil defense was an important element of United States national security, it was not so significant as to receive a small fraction of the major national security programs' funding.

Naturally, a particular agency or organization cannot be overwhelmingly successful without funding to carry out its vital programs. While the annual reports of the FCDA enthusiastically report successes and progress, early on there existed an underlying theme in each report that a significant amount of work was unfinished. For example, Millard Caldwell, FCDA Administrator 1951-1953, had this to say with respect to progress and funding: "Civil Defense has made real progress despite its newness, lack of funds, and other handicaps. Yet, those who live with Civil Defense are acutely aware of how much more remains to be done before America has the kind of civil defense that will be a formidable force either to keep peace or to help win a war." Likewise, Val Peterson, the FCDA Administrator 1953-1957, echoed this same feeling in his introduction to the Annual Report for 1954 saying that: "While we are justified in looking back over the past year and checking off some solid accomplishments, we should

not mistake the progress that has been made for the completion of the job of civil defense. We have a long and difficult road to travel . . . before we can feel confident that our civil defense is adequate.” The last four annual reports took a much different tone and were unnaturally void of any discussion of the “difficult road” or what could have been accomplished with greater funding. The FCDA began to realize that no amount of planning and preparation could ever prepare a nation for a nuclear attack. These sentiments were usually limited to news media interviews.¹

This difficult road that the FCDA did face was one which Congress chose for the FCDA from its inception. While receiving the mandate discussed in Chapter I “to provide a plan of civil defense for the protection of life and property in the United States from attack,” its budget allocations consistently fell far below requests in the FCDA’s earlier years. The worst incident of this was in the fiscal year (FY) 1952, when the FCDA’s first budget request was cut eighty percent. On 1 November 1951, Congress signed a bill authorizing the FCDA \$75.350 million of its requested \$535 million. This amount, authorized with only two months left in the year, was equal to sixty-nine percent of its total available federal funds from January to December 1951 of \$108.932 million.²

The amount requested by Truman for FY 1952 was designed to finance programs and operations that reflected how the executive office initially conceived civil defense planning in the United States. In its request, the three major categories of expenses were for operations, protective facilities and a procurement fund. Over fifty percent of the

¹Annual Report of 1952, 3; Annual Report for 1954, 7.

²“Federal Civil Defense Act of 1950,” 90; “\$806,454,000 Asked for Defense Units,” New York Times, 22 June 1951, 1; “Truman Deplores Defense Fund Cut,” New York Times, 3 November 1951, 1; Annual Report for 1951, 36. (New York Times hereafter cited as NYT.)

requested funds for civil defense were for protective facilities, to be used to supply matching funds to states for the modification of existing structures for the protection of civilians. This was something that was unique to requests under the Truman administration. Even though Eisenhower never included requests for shelters in his requests, they were never fully funded by Congress either.³

The trend in superficial funding for the FCDA plagued its entire history. Both Presidents Truman and Eisenhower called civil defense a quintessential part of national security, even comparing its importance to the other branches of national defense. On 12 January 1952 President Truman made a public announcement concerning civil defense: “It is rated by our top military leaders as a coequal partner with the military in our security program.” President Eisenhower revealed similar feelings about civil defense in his 1955 Congressional budget address: “Civil defense is also [with respect to the Department of Defense] an integral part of the overall program for defense of the continental United States against enemy attack.” However, in its eight years of existence, the FCDA received barely any funding compared with the other branches linked to national security. In FY 1955, for example, the three and a half year old FCDA did not even receive one half of one percent of what the army’s actual budget expenditures totaled. For that year, the army’s actual expenditures totaled \$8,899 million, while the FCDA’s totaled \$42 million. The air force and naval branches’ expenditures amounted to \$16,407 million and \$9,733 million respectively. Expenditures for the development and

³“Truman Requests \$1,732,859,274 More to Speed Defense,” NYT, 2 March 1951, 1.

control of atomic energy even totaled \$1,857 million. Clearly passive defense was not the major focus during the FCDA's history.⁴

President Truman believed that a substantial appropriation was important and necessary in order to avoid "a fatal gap in our security structure." In the age of nuclear weapons and intercontinental bombers, passive defense was becoming as important as active defense in determining who would win a war. In Truman's message to Congress transmitting the first FCDA annual report, he noted there existed only a "skeleton of a good civil defense program." More support for this essential program was necessary. Truman understood that a nuclear war would be fought and won based the homefront's ability to survive and recover from an attack. Although he believed civil defense was primarily a state and local responsibility, Truman felt these federal funds were needed to finance "Federal stockpiles of essential supplies" and to "match State and local expenditures to prepare protective shelters in densely populated areas and to assemble necessary local equipment."⁵

What was required of the federal government was to bolster passive defense. Truman believed it needed to increase funding to ensure the FCDA could fully prepare the civilian population for an attack by vastly increasing its stockpile of medical and other emergency supplies, helping states to build shelters and providing extensive training on what to do during and after an attack. When these things were accomplished

⁴Public Papers, Truman, 1952-1953, 25; U.S., President, Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States (Washington, DC: Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Service, 1959), Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1955, 119; "Comparison of Budget Receipts and Expenditures by Function: Fiscal Years 1950 through 1959," NYT, 14 January 1958, 17.

⁵Public Papers, Truman, 1952-1953, 99, 289-290.

to allow a reasonable level of security, Truman claimed the program for peace would also be served in making such an attack unprofitable. Thus there existed a twofold need for an adequate civil defense program.⁶

Based on that reasoning Truman requested \$535 million for FY 1952. Compared with the \$33 million allowed for actual expenditures in FY 1952 and the less than half a million for FY 1951, Truman requested what again appeared to be a substantial amount for FY 1953. He urged Congress to allocate \$339 for estimated expenditures (\$600 million new obligational authority). However, when compared with the \$51,200 million requested for estimated expenditures of the military services (\$52,400 new obligational authority), it was very far from an equal share of the funds devoted to national security. Congress only authorized \$51 million for actual civil defense expenditures in FY 1953. Again warning of a “fatal gap in our security structure,” Truman requested \$150 million for FY 1954. Then President-elect Eisenhower would seek to lower this amount.⁷

Truman’s response to Congressional slashes to FCDA budget requests was one of outrage. He publicly criticized Congress 2 November 1951, for its \$460 million cut to the FY 1952 budget request. Truman charged Congress “frustrated” legislation for the program by providing inadequate funding. Truman was particularly disturbed by the complete cut of funding for protective shelters and the sharp decrease of funds for stockpiling emergency equipment: “It is reckless to evade, under the pretense of economy, the national responsibility for initiating a balanced Federal-state civil defense

⁶*Ibid.*, 99, 289-290.

⁷*Ibid.*, 99, 1154-1156.

program.” Overall, from 1951 to 1953, Truman requested \$1.5 billion for civil defense. Congress appropriated 10% of that, or \$153 million.⁸

Caldwell also chided Congress for the same drastic cuts made to the FCDA budget. Caldwell commented that “Congress should kill civil defense or support it,” after learning of the House Appropriations Committees cuts to the FCDA. While public apathy was blamed as the culprit, Caldwell complained that the public apathy referred to by Congress was in fact derived from the leadership’s apathy. He believed that “the public looks to its leadership for its cue.” Caldwell cited the leadership’s false belief that the military would handle civilian defense in the event of an attack even though the military did not want this responsibility, or the even less likely scenario that the military could prevent such an attack, as the source of their apathy. This type of ignorance and blind faith in new technology was what the FCDA needed to overcome in order to prepare the United States for a strike. It was also preventing the FCDA from obtaining the means to fight such ignorance. Reducing FCDA funds to a marginal status would not serve to help it overcome public apathy, which plagued the FCDA throughout its entire history. Whatever the apathy’s source, the lack of public response to cuts to the FCDA budget would most likely not persuade members of Congress to rethink their funding decisions, though many state and local officials publicly vowed they would try.⁹

McEnaney pointed out that even though Congress easily passed the FCD Act of 1950, it was done with little enthusiasm. It was part of a “political compromise, the

⁸“Truman Deplores Defense Fund Cut,” NYT, 3 November 1951, 1,6; McEnaney, Civil Defense Begins at Home, 25.

⁹Annual Report for 1951, v; Jay Walz, “Fund Cuts Decried by 2 U.S. Agencies,” NYT, 19 August 1951, 42; Huston, Luther, “Apathy Greets Civil Defense Cuts” NYT, 2 September 1951,(IV) 8; “Civil Defense Cut Decried by States,” NYT, 27 August 1951, 4.

outcome of ideological struggles over the size, power and priorities of a militarizing postwar state” which sought to address concerns that crossed party lines. She attributed lack of Congressional funding to civil defense programs by Republicans and Democrats as representative of the “self-help” principle of civil defense. McEnaney concluded that “self-help” allowed for a compromise between conservative concerns about “a militarized New Deal reprise” and “liberal concerns about military control.” Members of Congress were able to appear tough on defense and communism by supporting the “self-help” principle of civil defense, while not taking funds away from active defense.¹⁰

Congress then consistently supported cuts to the FCDA’s budget based on this reasoning, while the FCDA operated under the assumption that its program constituted an essential part of national security. In August 1951, the House Appropriations Committee recommended an 87% cut to the FCDA’s requested \$535 million for FY 1952. The New York Times reported the Committee “accused the [FCDA] of again submitting a program lacking in realism and coordination.” The Committee was unconvinced that the FCDA had created appropriate “Federal–local arrangements for providing protective facilities.” The Committee believed better use could be made of existing facilities and that “state and local agencies should provide for fire-fighting equipment and warden services.” Disagreeing with this assessment, the FCDA retorted that: “Forty-eight states, three territories and more than 100,000 volunteers believe the plan is a good one.” Seventy-two million dollars of the FCDA budget request was already earmarked for matching funds to states.¹¹

¹⁰McEnaney, Civil Defense Begins at Home, 24-25.

¹¹C. P. Trussell, “Money is Slashed for Civil Defense,” NYT, 18 August 1951, 5; Jay Walz, “Fund Cuts Decried by 2 U.S. Agencies,” NYT, 19 August 1951, 42.

Conversely, though Eisenhower did feel that civil defense was vital to national security, he, unlike Truman, agreed that investing millions of dollars in the program would do little to aid the program. At a news conference on 14 March 1956, Eisenhower said the success or failure of civil defense rested upon the citizens of the United States, not Congressional appropriations for a federal agency. Learning what steps to take in the event of an emergency was the only thing, Eisenhower felt, that would make civil defense effective. This was closely linked to his plan to balance both economic and military strength and his belief in the primacy of state and civic responsibility.¹²

Throughout his presidency, Eisenhower consistently tried to keep FCDA expenditures to a minimum, while trying to account for changes in technology. His budget requests were well below the three requests made under the Truman administration, a much easier task when excluding appropriations for shelters. While Truman cited a national crisis and security gaps, Eisenhower spoke of solvency, the federal leadership role and state responsibility.

As one of his first goals in office, Eisenhower sought to reduce Truman's FY 1954 budget. Eisenhower was able to cut the request for civil defense funds down from \$150 million to \$125 million, though Congress allowed only a total of \$60 million of that amount. A year later, Eisenhower requested only \$68 million for civil defense, and for FY 1956 he requested \$59.3 million. In the same years, Congress allowed a low of \$42 million for FY 1955 civil defense expenditures and \$56 million for FY 1956. Actual expenditures of the army, air force and navy averaged \$11,900 million each for FY 1956.

¹²Public Papers, Eisenhower, 1956, 309-310; Robert R. Bowie and Richard J. Immerman, Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped an Enduring Cold War Strategy, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 75.

Between 1954 and 1958, Eisenhower requested \$564 million for civil defense, compared to Truman's \$1.5 billion in three years. Congress appropriated \$296 million of Eisenhower's requests.¹³

Eisenhower never publicly responded to the lack of financial support to the FCDA, though Congressional cuts were not on the scale as those faced by Truman. Eisenhower initially interpreted the responsibilities of the FCDA differently from Truman, seeing it with more of a supporting role for state and local civil defense organizations. The real key, according to Eisenhower, was the citizenry: "Civil defense is absolutely impossible without the complete and enthusiastic cooperation . . . of every man, woman and child in the United States."¹⁴

While not speaking about FCDA cuts, Eisenhower did, however, publicly speak about lack of public support for the FCDA, and consistent with his belief that people, not programs, were its key to success, he admonished those who attempted to disregard civil defense preparation and training. In his remarks to the National Women's Advisory Committee on Civil Defense 26 October 1954, Eisenhower said: "Americans have a very great fear of being thought a little 'boy scoutie . . .'; that is, being a little bit too naïve, too child-like in their approach." This was something to be overcome. He believed that preparedness, whether for a bombing squadron or first aid unit, lessens the chances for defeat. Moreover, he said "it lessens the chances for war."¹⁵

¹³"Comparison of Budget Receipts and Expenditures by Function: Fiscal Years 1950 through 1959," NYT, 14 January 1958, 17; McEnaney, Civil Defense Begins at Home, 26.

¹⁴Public Papers, Eisenhower, 1953, 539.

¹⁵Public Papers, Eisenhower, 1954, 961-962.

Though Eisenhower never remonstrated about cuts to FCDA funding, his newly appointed FCDA Administrator, Val Peterson, did. He revealed his concerns about funding cuts to the Senate Appropriations Committee on 20 July 1953, saying: "We spend billions on how to defeat the enemy, but only a handful of dollars on how to protect the American people." The "fool's paradise" Americans were living in, including members of Congress, could instantaneously collapse into their "greatest hour of need." Without adequately funded programs, the results could needlessly be catastrophic. In October 1953, Peterson said: "I believe when members of Congress, and the people generally, are thoroughly informed as to the danger which we face, we will then find that the money will be provided."¹⁶

Peterson's assessment of what would happen when the people and Congress learned the nature of the threat the population of the United States was not completely accurate. Instead of moving to support the programs for which the FCDA requested the funding, Congress later expressed serious doubts about Peterson and the FCDA. Both Republicans and Democrats in the House criticized the FCDA's basic program of evacuation and said that after spending \$300 million, there was still no adequate civil defense program in the United States.¹⁷

In order to meet the challenges and responsibilities of civil defense within the United States, the FCDA operated under two arms of a civil defense organization. In the first, the FCDA established seven major offices and three minor offices in its first year

¹⁶"Civil Defense Cut Scored," NYT, 22 July 1953, 19; "Civil Defense Whip Asked By Peterson," NYT, 30 May 1955, 11; "\$650,000,000 to Be Asked for Civil Defense, 14 Times This Year's Grant by Congress," NYT, 27 October 1953, 10.

¹⁷E. W. Kenworthy, "Civil Defense Cuts by House Indicate Doubts in Program," NYT, 24 March, 1957 1.

with the goal of effectively and efficiently devising and carrying out its plans for national civil defense. Each office was to develop specific plans and policies related to different areas of civil defense. Some offices were related to essential services, like fire fighting for example, while others dealt with the FCDA's specific needs, such as human resources.

At its national headquarters, the FCDA offices of Technical Services, Health and Welfare, Operational Services, Volunteer Manpower, and Training and Education each formulated blueprints and procedures related to their specific civil defense areas. They were also responsible for aiding states in organizing and operating these specific civil defense functions. The Office of Plans and Policies was to coordinate the activities of these offices within the FCDA, as well as with other federal, state and local agencies or groups. Administrative duties, such as the handling of financial issues, administrative tasks and security functions were controlled by the Management Office. Each of these specific offices were headed by an Assistant Administrator, directly responsible to the FCDA Administrator.

The remaining three offices were headed by Directors, also responsible to the FCDA Administrator. The Public Affairs Office Director was responsible for developing and administering the public technical and educational program. The General Counsel's Office handled all legal responsibilities. The responsibility of coordinating and directing the FCDA's regional offices was a duty of the Director of Field Administration Office.

The Office of Technical Services was concerned with researching and developing programs for specialized civil defense services for state and local areas. In the event of an atomic attack, the FCDA anticipated that specialized engineering and technical skills

would be needed to help the metropolitan areas that were attacked to quickly recover. Some of problems that this office worked to deal with were disruption of public utilities and communications and streets that were blocked with debris and rubble.¹⁸

The responsibility for dealing with the number of people who would be left homeless as the result of an attack was assigned to the Health and Welfare Office. It was assumed that after an attack the number of people who would be left homeless would outnumber the casualties. The homeless were expected to also be without food, adequate clothing or medical care. There was also the devastating problem of the loss of loved ones and post-attack trauma that needed to be handled by this office.¹⁹

The Operations Services Office was responsible for handling planning and implementation of some of the functioning activities related to civil defense. Its main purpose was to ensure that civil defense forces and resources were utilized to their maximum capacity in the event of an attack. These included, for example, advising in the development of, supervising, overseeing, and coordinating the communications, warden, police, fire and rescue services with each other, local and state civil defense agencies and other federal agencies in the overall civil defense effort.²⁰

The offices of Volunteer Manpower and Training and Education oversaw the task of helping states secure the trained civilian forces necessary to run an effective attack response program. The Training and Education Office also ran the various staff colleges and training programs offered throughout the United States for local and state civil

¹⁸ Annual Report of 1951, 59.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 55.

²⁰ Annual Report of 1953, 117.

defense workers and volunteers. In addition, that office also compiled the training manuals, bulletins, and movies that informed the general public about the dangers of atomic weapons and civil defense procedures.²¹

These seven offices, plus the three minor offices, performed their duties within the FCDA until 1953. It was that year during which the FCDA revamped its entire organization. This was brought about by two factors. First, Val Peterson, former Nebraska Governor, became the new FCDA Administrator 20 February 1953. He saw an overlap in operations and wished to eliminate it by a reorganization; the idea was to save time and make better use of the FCDA's limited funds. Second, the advent of thermonuclear weapons urged greater efficiency in civil defense planning. Old assumptions about bombing targets and fallout were in need of constant revision as more was learned about the hydrogen bomb's capabilities. Thus, the ten initial offices were slimmed down to six offices. The Offices were the General Counsel, Planning Staff, Education Services, Operations Control Services, Technical Advisory Services, and General Administration Services.²²

All of the same duties discussed above were still performed by the newly organized office, but the FCDA desired to apply its past experiences of the two prior years of planning in this update. Operations were streamlined to be more effective and more responsive in order to keep up with the changing demands of civil defense brought about by even more powerful bombs. The reorganization also sought to make a greater

²¹ Annual Report of 1952, 65-71

²² Annual Report of 1953, 53-56.

effort to efficiently utilize the existing federal, state and local agencies and to further decentralize the FCDA by giving the regional offices more authority.²³

The other administrative arm of the FCDA was the Regional Offices, each which headed a geographical region of the country. The Offices were designed to be an intermediary between the FCDA headquarters and the various state and local civil defense offices in the regions. They had a role in both pre-attack planning and during a civil defense emergency, during which time they were prepared to act independently if necessary. The Regional Directors were given authority to delegate matching funds to states under the federal contributions program, where the FCDA equally matched state funds for civil defense programs, facilities and equipment. The Regional Offices were the part of the FCDA that worked most closely with the state and local civil defense agencies in assisting them to develop operational plans. Regional civil defense officials also organized regional civil defense conferences and planned exercises that coordinated with the Armed Forces. In addition, the Regional Offices helped states develop and enter into mutual aid agreements.²⁴

Initially there were nine Regional Offices established in 1952 by the FCDA. In mid-1953, coinciding with the reorganization of the FCDA offices at the national headquarters, the nine civil defense regions in the United State were redistributed to create seven regions, "conforming more closely with the field organizational pattern of the Armed Forces." The seven regional offices were based in Boston, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, Denver and San Francisco. By 1955, all of these headquarters,

²³*Ibid.*, 53-56.

²⁴Annual Report of 1952, 29-30.

except the Denver Regional Office, had been relocated to “points of comparative safety,” away from urban centers.²⁵

Throughout its existence, a small number of permanent, paid civil defense employees staffed the FCDA Offices at its headquarters and regional offices. The majority of civil defense employees were volunteers who staffed the local civil defense organizations. The philosophy of the FCDA was to have a “hard core” of skilled civil defense personnel, whom they recruited from various federal agencies, as well as from the private industrial and professional sectors. Their responsibility was to train, organize and direct the civil defense volunteers who would perform vital tasks during and after an attack.²⁶

In its first full year of existence, the FCDA recruited a total of 859 such permanent employees. Almost eight hundred of that number were based at the federal headquarters, then located in Washington, DC. The remaining number of paid civil defense employees staffed the regional offices spread throughout the United States. The number of employees of the FCDA remained fairly constant throughout its history, fluctuating to reflect budgetary cuts. The FCDA’s personnel goal was to have a small, well trained work force of those individuals “with the best possible qualifications,” so that the number of employees could be kept to a minimum.²⁷

Those whom the FCDA recruited for its staff came from a variety of specialty areas, most naturally reflecting civil defense needs. The employees came with

²⁵ Annual Report of 1953, 25; Annual Report of 1955, 149.

²⁶ Annual Report of 1951, 72.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 72.

backgrounds in electronics, public safety, media information, public relations, health care and management. After recruitment, the new employees were put through a series of orientation courses, usually at the newly established FCDA Staff College. The FCDA Staff College instructors also trained city, county and state leaders and armed forces personnel from across the United States in civil defense administrative and training techniques.²⁸

The Staff College moved from Olney, MD to Battle Creek, MI in 1955, following the move of the FCDA national headquarters. There, the instructors taught a one week administration course. They also developed other specialized courses lasting at least one week that covered, for example, operational problems local civil defense leaders would face in the event of an attack and one on evacuation problems and techniques.

The Rescue School in Olney, MD was the counterpart of the Staff College. It was at this school that two week courses on civil defense rescue techniques were taught. Beginning in August 1954, the Staff College and the Rescue School also offered special traveling conferences and instruction sessions for specialized civil defense groups, such as police, clergy or health officials, in a variety of locations. Their purpose was to assist states with developing their own training programs. In exchange for bringing this instruction directly to state and local officials, the state agreed to hold the same type of conference twice a year for three years. This was an example of the FCDA's information dispersal training where individuals who received training agreed to train another group of civil defense workers, usually volunteers, in order to spread civil defense knowledge.²⁹

²⁸ Annual Report of 1955, 8-9.

²⁹ Annual Report of 1956, 51-54.

In addition to its own staff at the FCDA headquarters and in its Regional Offices, the FCDA had access to a number of employees from other federal agencies and departments. One of the FCDA's goal was to make use of existing specialized personnel whenever possible for civil defense aims. This served a three-part purpose: it kept expenses down by not having to hire people for the task, it utilized someone with existing skills and training essential to civil defense, and it ensured that person's skill were kept sharp because they were normally engaged in that function. Also, the FCD Act of 1950 allowed the FCDA Administrator to delegate civil defense responsibilities to existing Federal agencies and departments. In addition, "Executive Order 10646" of April 1952 directed each federal agency and department to plan for the use of its available resources in a civil defense emergency through consultation with the FCDA. By the end of 1955, thirty-three specific civil defense responsibilities had been assigned to seven federal agencies.³⁰

For example, the Department of Agriculture worked with the FCDA on developing an emergency food supply program, a program on education and protection from biological and chemical warfare of plants and animals, and plan for fighting fires in rural areas and forests. The Assistant Secretary of Water and Power within the Department of the Interior was charged with planning for the emergency restoration of power. The Housing and Home Finance Agency was another federal agency closely involved in civil defense planning. It worked on plans to incorporate protective measures into housing and building codes. Some other federal agencies and departments that worked with the FCDA were the Department of Defense, the Atomic Energy

³⁰Annual Report of 1952, 105.

Commission, the Treasury Department, Library of Congress, Veterans Administration and the Department of Justice.³¹

Weighing the budgetary restrictions and lack of Congressional support with the FCDA's access to such a variety of employees, federal agencies and areas of the country, it is not apparently clear how well this organization could perform its job of preparing the civilian population for an enemy attack. One of the main factors in determining how well the FCDA performed this duty was how well the FCDA was able to reach the people living in the towns and cities that it would really rely on for a successful civil defense program. President Eisenhower understood this when he said: "You could appropriate billions, you could put every kind of device and arrangement throughout this country, but unless the people themselves will take an interest, and this means learning what they must do in the event of a catastrophe, civil defense will never reach the state of efficiency that it should."³²

³¹Annual Report of 1955, 46-53.

³²Public Papers, Eisenhower, 1956, 310.

CHAPTER IV

CONTROLLING FEAR

Despite all the obstacles that the FCDA faced through Congressional and public apathy, as well as lack of funding and changing technology, civil defense did make many positive strides during the years of the FCDA's existence. The FCDA devised many programs over its eight year history, some of which were dedicated to specific civil defense needs, such as the creation and expansion of the Civil Air Defense Warning network. Though the FCDA's overall accomplishments resulted from many immediate and long-range programs and goals, none were as essential to civil defense as public education. The FCDA's public education program was the most important of all the FCDA's programs because it was the foundation on which all other programs rested. It was designed to directly reach every individual in the United States and to give those individuals basic information about the threats posed by nuclear weapons and about how to protect themselves. Without first giving citizens this basic information, people, for example, would not be able to understand warning signals or know the specific dangers they faced if they should ignore those signals. In addition, civil defense planners believed that without basic civil defense information, the population would simply be unable to respond in an appropriate manner to an attack in order to maintain its will to survive and defeat the enemy.

For civil defense planners, public apathy was the most difficult obstacle to overcome. To muster support for and interest in civil defense, the FCDA needed to strike a delicate balance between making people aware of the dangers of an atomic attack,

allowing them to still think they could survive it, and supporting the federal government's foreign policy that put them at risk of such an attack. In some respects, this was the true reason for the FCDA's existence. The goal was accomplished through a number of different means.¹

According to sociologist Guy Oakes, "early civil defense theory held that anxieties about nuclear war would create an extravagant emotional response." Americans' fears that a nuclear attack would not only risk lives, but their entire way of life and maybe even all of life itself, would render citizens incapable of responding to an attack in manner that protected themselves, not to mention other individuals. They would either endanger themselves by an irrational bid to save themselves, neglecting all others, or they would lapse into a state of stupor and inaction. In either case, this "nuclear terror would destroy the emotional restraints and moral sanctions that tie individuals to their routine roles and responsibilities. As a result, the norms that underpin the social order would collapse."²

This theory was also supported by post-World War II military planning, outlined in a report from a Joint Chiefs of Staff Evaluation Board on "Operation Crossroads." Completed 30 June 1947, the report revealed that the principle value of atomic weapons was in their ability to "break the will of nations and of peoples." This was similar to the theory behind aerial bombardments of densely populated cities. Oakes noted that a single bomb did not have to be dropped to achieve this effect: the fact of their existence could create terror in a nation when it believed it was threatened with their use. The next war

¹McEnaney, Civil Defense Begins at Home, 4-6; Oakes, The Imaginary War, 30-31.

²Oakes, The Imaginary War, 34.

would not be won by destroying the enemy's forces and resources; the JCS Board determined it would be won by the side that exploited the "psychological implication" of the bomb.³

In August 1947, the Joints Chiefs concluded their planning for an attack against the Soviet Union, code named BROILER. The premise of the plan was an "air-atomic" raid of Soviet cities in an effort to capitalize on the psychological capabilities of the bomb. Oakes noted that civil defense planners later transposed this same plan. They attributed the aims of creating mass panic and terror, thus diminishing the enemy's will to fight, to the Soviets and assumed that this was how the United States would be attacked.⁴

The Bull Report of February 1947 and the Hopley Report of October 1948, which both had investigated the need for civil defense, how it should be organized and who should be responsible for it, agreed with the same attack scenario. The Bull Report revealed fears that the home front would easily break down to the point of being more dangerous to the country than enemy forces by giving into internal forces of disloyalty and sabotage if faced with such an attack on population centers. The Hopley Report also saw panic and terror as the most dangerous effects of a nuclear attack. Both reports recommended a program to bolster the public's strength and will to prevent a breakdown of the social order, as did a 3 November 1950 NSRB brief. The Hopley Report concluded that panic comes from fear, and fear comes from ignorance. If the public could be educated about nuclear weapons and what it needed to do to protect itself, the

³*Ibid.*, 35.

⁴*Ibid.*, 35-36.

negative psychological effects could be replaced by calm action by those in the cities being attacked.⁵

For the first several years of the FCDA's existence, it concentrated its resources in the cities it considered "critical target areas" because it "assumed that large concentrations of industry and people will be major targets for attack with nuclear weapons." In 1953, based on statistics from the Census Bureau and Department of Labor, the FCDA designated ninety-two cities as "critical target areas," which the FCDA determined "must receive priority in civil defense planning." However, by 1955, because of more powerful weapons and a better understanding of radiation fallout, the FCDA began urging all cities and communities, regardless of size or location, to be prepared and increased the scale of its civil defense education programs.⁶

In order to eliminate the potential negative psychological effects of a nuclear attack against the United States, the FCDA developed its public education program to combat public ignorance of and apathy toward civil defense. When the FCDA was first created, its Administrator, Millard Caldwell, perceived that the vast majority of Americans had little knowledge of what to do to protect themselves in the event of an enemy attack. To determine what people actually knew, the FCDA relied on personal interview studies done in eleven major metropolitan areas by the Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan. Its first set of interviews was conducted in late 1950.⁷

⁵*Ibid.*, 37-38.

⁶Annual Report of 1953, 11,14; Annual Report of 1955, 16.

⁷Annual Report of 1951, 8.

In late 1950, only sixty-two percent of the people interviewed had “heard or read anything about what a person ought to do for his own or his family’s safety if there were an atomic bomb attack.” By August 1951, when a second interview was conducted, the number of people had grown to eighty-seven percent based on the first ten months of the FCDA’s public education program. However, as Caldwell pointed out, the amount of knowledge possessed by that eighty-seven percent of people was itself significantly low. “At best, the present state of knowledge averages no more than ten to fifteen percent of what the individual ought to know for full preparedness for himself and his family.”⁸

In order to get the basic information to the population on the dangers of an atomic attack and civil defense measures to protect against them, the FCDA used eight channels of communication. It saw civil defense information conveyed through booklets, manuals and pamphlets, radio programs, television programs, motion pictures, newspaper articles, magazine articles, affiliation with hundreds of national organizations, and through advertising and special programs.⁹

The printed material prepared and published by the FCDA for distribution to technical specialty groups, teachers and schools, state and local civil defense organizations and the general population had, what the FCDA considered, a “triple impact” on civil defense knowledge. First, the FCDA provided vital and necessary civil defense information directly to the people who needed it. Second, many of these publications were reprinted by private organizations in mass numbers, substantially increasing the materials’ circulation. Finally, the printed material published by the

⁸*Ibid.*, 9.

⁹*Ibid.*, 10.

FCDA spawned other independently produced civil defense publications, again greatly increasing the number of people who had access to survival information.¹⁰

An example of how this system increased circulation of originally produced FCDA information was the public booklet “Survival Under Atomic Attack.” The FCDA issued 225,000 copies of this booklet in 1951 with a note authorizing reproduction of it for sale or free distribution. By the end of that same year, the FCDA reported that over 4 million copies had been reprinted in California alone. On 14 October 1951, the New York Times listed “Survival Under Atomic Attack” on its best seller list. Based on reported reproductions and sales, the FCDA estimated that over 20 million copies of the booklet were in American homes by the end of 1951.¹¹

Some of the other public information published by the FCDA were “Duck and Cover: Children’s Self-Protection Booklet” (1951-1952), “What You Should Know about Biological Warfare” (1951), “Before Disaster Strikes: What To Do Now About Emergency Sanitation At Home” (1953-1956), “Home Protection Exercises: A Family Action Program” (1954-1958), “Facts about the H-Bomb” (1955), “Facts About Fallout” (1955-1958), “What You Should Know About Radioactive Fallout” (1955-1956) and “Fire Fighting for Householder” (1951-1956). Some of the publications issued by the FCDA in the early years of its program became obsolete and were either eliminated or updated because of changes in weapons and the FCDA’s understanding of civil defense procedures.¹²

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 10.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 10-11.

¹²Annual Report of 1952, 45; Annual Report of 1956, 61-67; Annual Report of 1958, 31. The Annual Report of 1956 provides the most thorough listing of the FCDA’s

In addition to the handbooks, pamphlets and booklets distributed to the general public, the FCDA also produced numerous technical manuals and bulletins for workers and officials of the various civil defense specialties. Examples of these types of publications were “Emergency Blood Grouping Laboratory Techniques” (1952), “Mortuary Services in Civil Defense” (1956), “Protection of Vital Records and Documents” (1955), “Clearance and Restoration of Streets and Highways in Civil Defense Emergencies” (1954), and “Getting Good Instructors for Civil Defense” (1952). These publications, based on the latest planning and research, were intended to aid state and local civil defense workers and specialized volunteers in organizing, planning and executing their duties in the event of a civil defense emergency. In 1955, for example, the FCDA focused more of its attention on radioactive fallout in the newest FCDA publications, as scientists and civil defense planners started to understand radiation as an obstacle to survival.¹³

The FCDA’s production and distribution of civil defense related information was impressive. In its Annual Reports, the FCDA published information on its dissemination of these types of publications. In its third year of existence, the FCDA itself managed to distribute approximately 12 million manuals, bulletins and guides, 10.2 million of which were public booklets. That same year, the FCDA had created twelve new publications, which it added to the ones of 1951 and 1952. By 1955, the FCDA had forty-five new publications, in addition to the ones it had retained and revised from previous years. Its total distribution for that year was an astonishing 42 million copies. As of 30 June 1956,

publications.

¹³Annual Report of 1956, 61-67. This is a comprehensive list of publications. Annual Report of 1955, 83.

approximately 145 million copies of the FCDA's booklets, manuals and pamphlets had been distributed by the FCDA. This number does not reflect the hundreds of millions more reproduced from the FCDA's originals.¹⁴

Radio and television spots constituted two other communication channels the FCDA used to help spread civil defense information and guidelines. Like its printed materials, the FCDA wrote and produced numerous recorded and filmed messages concerning civil defense and distributed them to radio and television stations throughout the United States. These productions allowed the FCDA to get its own version of the information to the public, in a very quick manner, instead of having it filtered through the press.¹⁵

Throughout its history, the FCDA continuously supplied radio and television stations with thousands of technical bulletins, as well as prepared civil defense promotion packets. As television stations appeared in more American cities and towns, the FCDA supplied them with "a basic kit of civil defense information." These kits included slides, spot announcement and films for the stations to air at their discretion. The FCDA also later worked to lend the new stations FCDA movies, such as "Operation Doorstop" (June 1953), a film based on the atomic tests at Yucca Flats, and "Operation Ivy" (March 1954), the first film of the explosion of a thermonuclear weapon produced by the Atomic Energy Commission.¹⁶

¹⁴Annual Report of 1953, 80; Annual Report of 1955, 86; Annual Report of 1956, 60.

¹⁵Annual Report of 1954, 94; Annual Report of 1955, 76.

¹⁶Annual Report of 1954, 93; Annual Report of 1953, 73.

By 1954, a report by the Advertising Research Foundation stated the 96.4 percent of American households had either a radio or television set in working order, and 58.1 percent of homes had working television sets. Early on, the FCDA tried to take full advantage of television as a new medium of communication. In December 1951, it developed its own reproductions, or “kinescopes,” of its seven-part half-hour productions of the “Survival” series, which was broadcast to 12 million viewers live on NBC. This enabled the series “to obtain saturation coverage in the critical target areas serviced by television.” The FCDA estimated that the television industry donated \$100,000 in public service time for the 392 airings of segments of the series, with an investment of only \$5,300 by the FCDA.¹⁷

Networks continued to donate public service time for civil defense purposes throughout the FCDA’s existence. They also increasingly picked up coverage of civil defense activities. In 1955, for example more than fifty special network television programs were devoted to civil defense. The biggest civil defense story in 1955 was “Operation Cue,” which CBS and NBC covered jointly with live broadcasts for almost two weeks. “Operation Cue” was a comprehensive civil defense atomic test done in May 1955. The explosion and its effects on a “typical American community” were initially witnessed by an estimated 100 million television viewers.¹⁸

By the mid-1950s, as civil defense became more important to Americans, the FCDA’s cause of spreading essential civil defense information was aided by radio and television stars. Personalities such as Bing Crosby and Amos and Andy recorded civil

¹⁷ Annual Report of 1954, 55; Annual Report of 1952, 47.

¹⁸ Annual Report of 1954, 55; Annual Report of 1955, 6-7, 76-78.

defense radio announcements. The major television networks aided the cause by making stars like Jack Benny, Lucile Ball and Desi Arnez and George Burns and Gracie Allen available for a series of one minute civil defense ads.¹⁹

According to the FCDA's Annual Report of 1956, radio and television productions came to be used in three ways by the FCDA: (1) programs and ads kept "reminders of civil defense constantly before the public, (2) by integrating civil defense information into regular network broadcasts either by personal appearances of civil defense people or the material into the usual format of programming and (3) by preparing special civil defense programs for actual use on radio networks." By doing this, the FCDA attempted to place civil defense at the forefront of people lives by integrating it into their daily routine and making it seem as normal as any other program to which they listened or watched. This use and the tone of FCDA literature and productions fell under what Oakes classified as the "optimistic ontology," based on being able to survive and recover from attack, "which the government consistently promoted to the public."²⁰

In addition to its optimistic publications and productions, another means of communication the FCDA used to get information out to the public about the effects of nuclear weapons and methods of civil defense was the press. Though the FCDA naturally had no control over newspapers' and magazines' reporting of civil defense, it did take notice of the media's interest in civil defense and worked to encourage this and incorporate this into its information program. It did so by granting interviews, supplying guest columns and inviting the press to civil defense related activities. The FCDA and

¹⁹Annual Report of 1955, 76-78.

²⁰Annual Report of 1956, 59; Oakes, The Imaginary War, 160.

local and state civil defense offices also supplied an increasing number of press releases and informational bulletins to the nation's news source.²¹

According to the 1952 study of the Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan, fifty-one percent of people who knew about civil defense in 1952 received their information from newspapers. The FCDA daily sampled 100 of 1,773 daily newspapers that were printed in 1952, looking for civil defense and self-protection items. In addition, it also took a regular sample of the 10,500 weekly newspapers. According to the FCDA's analysis, an estimated 680,000 press items (news stories, editorials, cartoons, letters to the editor, and special publications) concerning civil defense appeared in the nation's newspapers that year. By 1955, the estimate was at 2 million press items in newspapers and magazines combined.²²

As the FCDA began to succeed in one of its main goals of the public education program -- to simply increase public awareness of civil defense, as well as to increase the population's knowledge of what to do in the event of an attack -- it commenced a shift of its program toward a call to action. The FCDA then began to emphasize its increasing desire for the 162 million people living in the United States to learn and practice civil defense in its public education program. If Americans were going to survive an enemy attack without succumbing to the "nuclear terror" Oakes described, the FCDA believed more effort would be required than simply clipping a civil defense survival guide out of the newspaper and putting it in a drawer. It required the public's active participation. "Civil defense preparedness is of the people; it is spiritual as well as material and is

²¹Annual Report of 1951, 11; Annual Report of 1954, 90-91.

²²Annual Report of 1952, 43; Annual Report of 1955, 74.

composed of the individual will to resist enemy force and the knowledge and means to act constructively and decisively in our national defense.” To active constructively during an civil defense emergency, people needed to get out and learn and practice what they would do.²³

The FCDA focused the use of the last three channels of communication more acutely toward this purpose. Motion pictures and films, affiliation with hundreds of national organizations, and its advertising and special programs were its chosen methods to get Americans accurately trained and actively involved in civil defense preparations. While these approaches still conveyed important information about the dangers of a attack and how civil defense could save lives, they were also used to motivate the population.

Motion pictures were a very important training tool used by the FCDA’s Staff College and Rescue Training Center, as well as state and local civil defense institutions. In addition, many of the motion pictures and films were also aired by the networks and local television stations in cooperation with the FCDA and state and local civil defense organizations. All of the FCDA’s early films were produced and distributed by private companies with FCDA technical assistance and policy guidance at no cost to the FCDA. Beginning in 1954, the films and motion pictures were produced both with and without FCDA sponsorship.²⁴

The FCDA motion pictures and films covered a variety of civil defense topics. Some, such as “Duck and Cover” (1952) and later “Operation Kids” (1956), were

²³ Annual Report of 1954, 75.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 95.

designed to train children in civil defense protection methods. Filmstrips like “Emergency First Aid” (1953), “The Role of the Warden in Fire” (1953), “Big Men in Small Boats” (1955 – described emergency uses of small water craft) and “Evacuation of Industrial Plants” (1956) explained specific civil defense operations and were used by instructors at all levels of civil defense training.²⁵

In order to reach groups interested in learning and doing more about civil defense, the FCDA and state and local civil defense organizations developed close ties with hundreds of national organizations. These organizations, which the FCDA considered strong supporters of civil defense, “disseminated civil defense information through their magazines, newsletters, and other publications, provided time for speakers and space for exhibits at their conventions, and in many instances provided volunteers for civil defense services.” Such incredible access to motivated groups of individuals who were interested in civil defense encouraged the FCDA and state and local civil defense organizations to work hard to supply these national organizations with materials, information and recognition in order to maintain their support.²⁶

Some groups of the hundreds of national organizations that became affiliated with the FCDA naturally did more to serve the FCDA’s goals than others. The most active national organizations were women’s groups. Starting with the FCDA’s Annual Report of 1952, a special section of each report was even dedicated to the civil defense activities of women’s organizations in the United States, aside from the review of simply “National Organizations.” In addition, in 1953 the FCDA formed a National Women’s Advisory

²⁵Annual Report of 1952, 136; Annual Report of 1955, 79; Annual Report of 1956, 58.

²⁶Annual Report of 1955, 80.

Committee (NWAC) which met annually in Washington, DC to discuss with civil defense leaders its recommendations for planning and policy.²⁷

By 1958, the FCDA NWAC was composed of the presidents of seventy-five of the one hundred plus women's organizations in the United States. The NWAC itself consisted of leaders of state Women's Advisory Committees. They represented over 27 million members of women's organizations nationwide. Some of the women's organizations that were affiliated with the FCDA and represented by the Advisory Committee were the Veterans of Foreign Wars and American Legion Auxiliaries, the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Future Homemakers of America, Girl Scouts, American Association of University Women, American Medical Association Auxiliary, and the separate National Councils of Catholic, Jewish and Negro Women.²⁸

Historian Laura McEnaney pointed out that some of the women were just as interested in serving their own goals as helping the FCDA's civil defense cause. Since civil defense preparedness was actually a very decentralized operation, coming down to family and personal preparedness, women were a natural ally of the FCDA because of their status as mothers, housewives and homemakers. This presented an opportunity, unanticipated by civil defense planners, for women to assume roles of importance and authority in their communities and families. Since each home in America was urged to be prepared to handle an attack, women found their maternalistic and household management skills could be used to elevate their status, not only in civil defense

²⁷ Annual Report of 1953, 79-80.

²⁸ Annual Report of 1958, 34; Annual Report of 1956, 45; Annual Report of 1953, 80; Annual Report of 1955, 82.

planning, but in Cold War defense planning as well. Meanwhile, as McEnaney stated: “Men’s paternal responsibilities as depicted in FCDA literature were less about supplying hands-on care for family members and more about providing the dynamic leadership that would pull the family through attack and recovery.”²⁹

Some of the ways in which the women’s organizations and other national organizations aided the FCDA were through direct means. As mentioned, the NWAC held annual conferences with the FCDA to discuss women’s civil defense concerns, observations and planning. Other organizations, like the American Federation of Labor, Congress of Industrial Organizations, American National Red Cross, International Association of Chiefs of Police, National Science Academy, and Blinded Veterans Association, also directly assisted the FCDA by developing programs for members’ participation in civil defense activities and services, as well as serving as consultants to the FCDA’s planners. Representatives of these and hundreds of other national organizations were actively involved in civil defense as they served on the FCDA National Advisory Committees, such as those of Labor, Industry, Emergency Feeding, Science Advisory, Veterans and Religious Affairs.³⁰

Other national organizations aided the FCDA by playing supporting civil defense roles in communities. In 1952, community branch members of 110 national organizations went out into their communities in support of the FCDA “Pledge for Home Defense” campaign. They worked to increase public awareness of family and personal

²⁹ Annual Report of 1955, 81-82; McEnaney, Civil Defense Begins at Home, 77, 88-89. Here, McEnaney also told of a August 1950 letter that a Texas housewife wrote to Secretary of Defense George Marshall. In it she asked him to help find the housewife’s “place in the atomic bomb defense plan.”

³⁰ Annual Report of 1954, 131, 138, 134; Annual Report of 1953, 79.

protection methods and to register civilians for training and duty in the active civil defense services. The American Legion formed hundreds of rescue teams to assist local civil defense directors during disasters. Many members of the Boy Scouts of America participated in the Ground Observers Corp for aircraft detection, and they served as messengers during 1954 and 1955 civil defense exercises.³¹

Another significant group the FCDA worked with was educators. This gave the FCDA and state and local civil defense organizations easy access to a large part of the population: school children. To reach this group of Americans, the FCDA published and distributed a number of different teaching manuals, film strips, workbooks and comic books for teachers and school children. The FCDA and the Department of Health, Education and Welfare also worked together with various national teachers' and education associations to integrate civil defense into school curriculums. They set up a program at three centers in the United States to conduct workshops, demonstrate experiments and discuss teaching aids with some of the nation's teachers. In addition, almost all of the states and territories established posts in their departments of education for some type of civil defense coordinator.³²

The "Duck and Cover" campaign was specifically designed by the FCDA to help school age children be directly involved in civil defense protection exercises. However, as Winkler noted, it was a "naïve enthusiasm" that they sought to stir up in children. By making the campaign's spokesman a cartoon turtle named Bert, the films and comic books sought to make self-protection easy enough for children to do. Winkler criticized

³¹Annual Report of 1952, 58; Annual Report of 1954, 92; Annual Report of 1955, 81.

³²Annual Report of 1956, 43.

this method for making “nuclear war seem like a minor inconvenience that could be handled playfully without undue disruption.”³³

In order to see how well all of the various civil defense training techniques and emergency plans would function, as well as to coax the population into practicing civil defense, the FCDA and local and state civil defense organizations coordinated various activities. The most important were the FCDA’s annual nationwide mock air raid drills, know as “Operation Alert.” These drills were designed not only to give the population a chance to practice its skills and training, but also to allow the FCDA to test its own operational capabilities and identify areas in need of strengthening. The first “Operation Alert,” also the first nationwide civil defense test, was staged 14 June 1954.

The hypothetical bombs began falling shortly after 11:00 AM. At the end of the twenty-four hour test period, 9 million were reported dead, 4.5 million were injured and at least 7 million were homeless after atomic bombs ranging in size from twenty kilotons to 160 kilotons “struck” forty-two United States cities (and eight in Canada). The public was involved in the test in twenty states, most in the northeast. In several cities throughout the US, civil defense forces engaged in the exercise by performing some type of drill, like the evacuation of a building or fire fighters traveling in from a neighboring area to “help” city departments.³⁴

The FCDA felt that these annual national exercises were invaluable to civil defense. The exercises simultaneously tested a variety of civil defense procedures, like evacuation, reception area preparedness, and emergency medical care. While pointing

³³Winkler, Life Under a Cloud, 114-116.

³⁴Annual Report of 1956, 33-45.

out some its deficiencies, the drills provided valuable planning information to the FCDA on how these plans, like the evacuation of 15 thousand essential members of the government from Washington, DC, could improve and what types of resources, like medical and food supplies, were still needed. President Eisenhower also conveyed similar thoughts on how valuable he believed the exercises were in a 17 July 1956 letter to Val Peterson: “Our civil defense program and its activities such as Operation Alert 1956 are essential to both [peace and preparedness].”³⁵

In reality, the “Operation Alert” exercises seemed more like events for the media than for the general population to practice, or at least to see first hand, how to survive an attack. The FCDA’s Annual Reports seemed to emphasize this as well: “The national impact of Operation Alert 1954 is best measured by the widespread press, radio and television coverage it received, the most extensive ever given a civil defense activity.” Likewise, the 1955 report read: “Although the exercise showed the Nation unprepared to cope with a thermonuclear attack, it concentrated the attention of the Nation on civil defense . . .” A potential source of seemingly negative press, McEnaney revealed that although all of this national press coverage was not positive, “FCDA-media cooperation blunted the most pointed criticisms.”³⁶

Oakes equated these annual tests of national civil defense preparedness as “an elaborate national sociodrama that combined elements of mobilization for war, disaster relief, the church social, summer camp, and the county fair.” The FCDA’s conclusions were always very positive. However, they tended to over-emphasize the good of what

³⁵Annual Report of 1955, 32-35; Public Papers, Eisenhower, 1956, 598.

³⁶Annual Report of 1956, 34; Annual Report of 1955, 32; McEnaney, Civil Defense Begins at Home, 50.

was learned and the level of awareness achieved, while somehow the fact that the FCDA still found Americans unprepared, after years of planning, was never viewed by the FCDA as a negative aspect of the exercises.³⁷

To be fair, it was, and still is, impossible for the FCDA or any organization to really prepare the entire population to survive a nuclear attack, especially when the civil defense program in the United States was only just a few years old. No amount of training and practice could do it. In fact, Val Peterson often said that the best way to survive was to not be there at all. Authors in The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists realized this during the 1950s, when one wrote that the policy had changed “from ‘Duck and Cover’ to ‘Run like Hell.’” The only goal that the FCDA could really achieve was to do its best to prepare those fortunate to survive for some type of post-attack recovery. This, however, did not stop several important and influential people from being critical of the FCDA.³⁸

³⁷Oakes, The Imaginary War, 84.

³⁸E.W. Kenworthy, “Civil Defense Cuts by House Indicate Doubts in Program,” NYT, 24 March 1957, 44; Mary M. Simpson, “A Long Hard Look at Civil Defense,” Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists 12 (November 1956): 346.

CHAPTER V

HOW IT ENDED

The FCDA was established in December 1950 to prepare the civilian population to protect itself. However, the conditions of attack under which it was obligated to perform this task changed dramatically over the course of the FCDA's eight years of existence. These changes naturally affected the FCDA's potential for success by reducing the effectiveness of its civil defense plans. In addition to making planning more difficult for the FCDA, changes in technology and the increasing bleakness they brought to chances for survival undermined much of the success the FCDA achieved prior to that point in rallying public and political support for its civil defense program. Val Peterson commented in the Annual Report of 1954 that: "Ever since civil defense started, the scientific and military developments have consistently been making it a little bit tougher. What looks satisfactory on day just isn't good enough the next day or the next week." One of the developments that was responsible for this was what Michael Mandelbaum called the "after-shock" of the atomic bomb: the hydrogen bomb.¹

The atomic bombs used against Japan at the end of World War II represented a massive increase in destructive capability of bombing devices. Scientists on the Manhattan Project used fission to release the energy contained in the nucleus of an atom by splitting that nucleus. When the United States used its first fission bomb, "Little Boy," against Hiroshima on 6 August 1945, it released the force of between 12,500 and 15,000 tons of TNT. "Fat Man," the nickname of the bomb exploded over Nagasaki

¹Annual Report of 1954, 10; Michael Mandelbaum, The Nuclear Question: US and Nuclear Weapons, 1946-1976 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 74.

three days later, created an explosion equal to about 22,000 tons of TNT. When the FCDA was created in December 1950, the highest yield fission bomb tested was equal to 49,000 tons of TNT. Part of "Operation Sandstone," this device, "Yoke," was tested on 30 April 1948 at Enewetak Atoll in the Marshall Islands.²

While Cold War tensions began to increase over the conflict in Asia, United States worries mounted over Soviet weapons capabilities. This prompted President Truman to accept the recommendations of the Joint Chiefs and his three person advisory committee of Dean Acheson, Secretary of State, David Lilienthal, Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, and Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson on the creation of devices far exceeding the power of the atomic bomb. President Truman announced to the world on 31 January 1950 that the United States would seek to create an even more powerful weapon, a bomb produced by fusion.³

Fusion bombs, or hydrogen bombs, used the energy produced by fission to fuse together isotopes of hydrogen. While the actual process of fusion creates less energy than fission in a nuclear reaction, the lighter material contains many more atoms. In comparison, 0.5 kilograms of hydrogen isotope fuel can yield 29,000 tons in a fusion reaction; conversely, if every atom of 0.5 kilograms of uranium were split in a fission reaction, it would yield an explosion equal to 9,900 tons.

The United States exploded its first hydrogen bomb, or thermonuclear device, in the "Mike" test, part of "Operation Ivy," on 1 November 1952. Its yield was 10,400,000

²Carey Sublette, ed., March 1999, "Gallery of US Nuclear Tests," Available [Online]: <<http://sun00781.dn.net/nuke/hew/Usa/Tests/index.html>> [9 November 2000].

³David Holloway, Stalin and the Bomb: The Soviet Union and Atomic Energy 1939-1956 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 301.

tons. This first device was about 1,000 times more powerful than the bomb exploded over Hiroshima. Nine months later, the Soviet Union tested its first hydrogen bomb on 12 August 1953. While this device was twenty-five times smaller than the Mike, it still put an end to any chance of a second nuclear monopoly by the United States.⁴

The effects of these new super-weapons were certainly felt by members of the civil defense community by forcing the FCDA to work even harder to ensure the population could still protect itself. It did not develop a real understanding of the critical differences between the atomic and hydrogen bombs until after the second round of hydrogen bomb testing by the United States on 1 March 1954. Up to that point, the FCDA worked on plans to combat the hydrogen bomb's increased explosive power and continued with its public education program.

For instance, the 1952 Planning Assumptions for the FCDA were based on an airborne Soviet attack by 400 bombers, seventy percent of which the Air Force predicted could conceivably penetrate United States defenses. The FCDA planned that sixty-seven of its critical target areas would be hit by at least one bomb. The FCDA assumed that the size of bombs the Soviets would attempt to use would be two and a half times the size of the bomb exploded over Hiroshima, or at least 31,250 tons yield. Based on this, the FCDA estimated that structures only within a two mile radius of ground zero would be destroyed or in need of repair after an attack; structures outside that area would most likely need no repair. The casualties estimated by the FCDA for a daytime attack without warning on a major metropolitan area would result in 220,000 deaths per bomb.

⁴*Ibid.*, 303-307.

This number could decrease based on other factors, like population dispersal and warning time. Consequently these measures were what the FCDA needed to focus on improving.⁵

The FCDA used the same information that President Eisenhower somberly presented to the United Nations General Assembly 8 December 1953 about the “awful arithmetic of the atomic bomb” for its 1953 Planning Assumptions. The FCDA did not include planning assumptions based on the actual detonation of the “Mike” test device, which was 1,000 times more powerful than the Hiroshima bomb; its calculations were based on what the FCDA said was twenty-five and fifty times the explosive power of “the size of bomb used at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.” It was actually based on a 20,000 ton equivalent explosive, neither the Hiroshima nor Nagasaki size. According to its Planning Assumptions, the FCDA did not expect damage outside of a 7.4 mile radius, or 170 square mile area, from ground zero.⁶

By 1954, greater understanding of the new hydrogen bombs forced the FCDA to conclude in its 1954 Planning Assumptions “that any city attacked, with very few exceptions, would be virtually destroyed.” This created a new delicate and sensitive public education task. The FCDA estimated that the bombs used would be in range of the explosion of millions of tons of TNT, more closely resembling the “Mike” test device. The only two means available to protect people against such powerful nuclear weapons were either adequate shelter or evacuation. However, since there was “no government-financed program for the construction of private shelters,” the best method of protection was “the reduction in population density in a target city.” While FCDA

⁵Annual Report of 1952,10-11.

⁶Public Papers, Eisenhower, 1953, 816; Annual Report of 1953, 7-8.

planners did recognize the problems of substantially increased radioactive contamination in areas far from ground zero created by hydrogen bombs exploded at ground level in the Annual Report of 1954, it did not include this aspect of attack problems its 1954 Planning Assumptions, nor did it incorporate it into its public education.⁷

The FCDA did report that it had directed “considerable effort” toward the study and analysis of fallout in 1954 based on thermonuclear tests conducted by the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC); however, the FCDA had not yet reached any conclusions as to how civil defense would be affected. These tests, conducted by the AEC and a joint military and civilian organization, were in the CASTLE Series at the Commission’s Pacific Proving Grounds. Test series were held to test the power and efficiency of high-yield thermonuclear devices, as well as to gauge the effects of the explosions.⁸

After its analysis of the 1 March – 14 May 1954 tests was finally completed, the FCDA included “radiological contamination” in its 1955 “type of attack” Planning Assumptions. It had also concluded that “flexible” evacuation plans needed to be developed based on meteorological data that could predict fallout patterns on a given day. The FCDA requested and received a supplementary appropriation by Congress in early 1955 for additional research to help the FCDA ensure its plans were “logical and correct.” Part of this money was used for a research program to design and develop a national radiological defense plan. Other funding was directed toward shelter research.⁹

⁷Annual Report of 1954, 12-13, 16.

⁸Annual Report of 1954, 31; U.S., Department of Defense, Defense Nuclear Agency, CASTLE Series, 1954, by Edwin J. Martin and Richard H. Rowland, 1 April 1982, 2, NTIS, DNA-6035F.

⁹Annual Report of 1955, 14, 17-18, 20.

In this same year, the FCDA began to focus its public education program on reeducating the public about the dangers fallout and protection measures. As posters, training manuals and technical bulletins imparted information on fallout to the public and the media, as well as other parts of the federal government, the FCDA began to truly experience how much more difficult technological and military advances really made its assignment. Val Peterson tried to optimistically express this in the Annual Report of 1955:

Stirred by a succession of major events directly involving civil defense, the American people in 1955 took a fresh look at this fast maturing offspring of the atomic age.

What they saw caused them to express themselves on the subject, through the public media, through their Representatives in Congress and State legislatures, and by individual calls and letters, more extensively than in any year since FCDA was established in 1951.

Overwhelmingly, what they had to say about civil defense was constructive. Not that it was entirely favorable – there was plenty of healthy criticism. People argued over evacuation and shelter and mass feeding, over warning time, sirens, and CONELRAD. They argued whether States and cities or the Federal Government should have the major responsibility for civil defense.

But almost no one argued whether civil defense was necessary.

Patient persuasion and the inexorable logic of bigger and better nuclear weapons had won at least this bridgehead to public acceptance.¹⁰

That acceptance was quickly waning as everyone began to realize of how destructive hydrogen bombs and the new enemy, fallout, could be.

Hydrogen bombs and fallout in themselves were not responsible for the eventual loss of public and political confidence in the FCDA; it was the anxious, fearful, and despondent feelings these untenable foes aroused in the public and the subsequent actions taken by other parts of the government that finally led to the demise of the FCDA. The FCDA was unable to do much more than it already had: it possessed neither funding nor

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 70.

executive support. Some of the issues of public concern Peterson mentioned, like evacuation and warning time, were not even under the remotest control of the FCDA, even if it had possessed unlimited funding and Eisenhower's support. This fact, however, did not stop what happened next from eliminating the FCDA's chance of controlling public fear and apathy, therefore rendering the FCDA impotent.

During its last three years, the FCDA tried to address the problems of radioactive contamination through its civil defense planning. However, it was not able develop a program to deal effectively with this, outside of public education, until 1958, when it established the FCDA Radiological Defense Program. This program was the culmination of a few years of research on thermonuclear weapons and their effects conducted by a multitude of different groups. Some organizations were sponsored by the FCDA, such as the American Machine & Foundry Co., the University of California and the National Bureau of Standards, while others were done at the request of other concerned groups or parts of the federal government, such as the Gaither Committee, set up by President Eisenhower in May 1957, the House Military Operations Subcommittee of the Committee on Government Operations, convened in January 1956, or the RAND Corporation Report, completed in July 1958. All of the studies, which relied heavily on the CASTLE series tests, pointed toward the need for shelters.¹¹

¹¹*Ibid.*, 7-12, 24-27; Annual Report of 1957, 23-29; U.S., Congress, Joint Committee on Defense Production, Deterrence and Survival in the Nuclear Age (The "Gaither Report" of 1957), 94th Cong., 2nd sess., 1967; U.S., Congress, House, Subcommittee of the Committee on Government Operations, Civil Defense for National Survival, parts 1-7: Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Government Operations, 84th Cong., 2nd sess., January 31-June 28, 1956; Report on the Study of Non-Military Defense, R-322 RC, 1 July, 1958 (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1958); David L. Snead, The Gaither Committee, Eisenhower, and the Cold War (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999), 44-45.

Starting in 1956, the FCDA officially recognized the need for shelters in its Annual Report, but it did not have a specific shelter policy because evacuation was still the official plan for civil defense, something only Eisenhower could change. Prior to 1956, the FCDA officially recognized the benefits of shelters for civil defense, but, because funding was never available for shelters and had not even been requested under Eisenhower, the FCDA did not specify the need for shelters in its reports. In 1956, the FCDA's "basic concept of civil defense" changed to consist of a "balanced program of evacuation and shelter" following a thorough investigation with the Atomic Energy Commission on the effects of hydrogen bombs.¹²

The study prompted the FCDA to try to persuade Eisenhower that federally sponsored shelters were essential to a successful civil defense program. The FCDA submitted a massive public shelter program proposal for \$32 billion to Eisenhower 21 December 1956. This proposal was very similar to the proposal that eventually came from the early 1956 House Military Operations Subcommittee of the Committee on Government Operations chaired by Chet Holifield, a democrat from California known as Mr. Atomic Energy. Eisenhower, however, remained unconvinced that a national shelter plan was necessary. He believed that it would financially overburden the federal government. In addition, Eisenhower felt a national shelter plan might raise United States allies' concerns that the United States might be too willing to fight a war and that the United States might also be willing to sacrifice its allies' populations in the event of war, while Americans safely huddled in federally funded shelters. Despite these economic and diplomatic concerns, Eisenhower agreed to establish the Gaither

¹²Annual Report of 1956, 2.

Committee to study the entire scope of preparedness, while Holifield's Subcommittee began a more thorough investigation of civil defense and the threat posed by nuclear weapons.¹³

The Gaither Committee, formerly called the Security Resources Panel, was not organized to study civil defense alone. It was constructed by Eisenhower's National Security Council to answer what historian David Snead said was "a series of questions, the most important being, 'What is the optimum balance between active and passive defense measures for the protection of the civil population?'" With regard to the shelter question, the Committee reached the same conclusion as did the FCDA and the Congressional committee: it recommended a \$25 billion shelter program, "a plan," McEnaney noted, "that mimicked the very proposals Eisenhower had convened it to scrutinize."¹⁴

The Gaither Committee's report, intended to be a top secret report, but was leaked to the press, and the proposal of Holifield's 1956 House Subcommittee, both confirmed the need for what the FCDA had originally requested in its beginning: federally sponsored public shelters. Yet because both committees, as well as their recommendations, were so highly publicized, they undermined public confidence and support of the FCDA. This happened for three reasons. The most obvious was that these inquiries surfaced during a time when public fear was rising over the fallout problem. Though the President and Congress perceived public pressure to do something, the inquiries actually increased public concern over the danger of hydrogen bombs as the

¹³McEnaney, Civil Defense Begins at Home, 56-57; Snead, The Gaither Committee, 44-45, 151-153.

¹⁴Snead, The Gaither Committee, 46.

reports became public knowledge. While this, viewed independently, was a positive result, it undermined confidence in the FCDA because people began to feel more vulnerable. This was especially true of the Gaither Committee Report, which initially peaked public interest because it was secret. Eisenhower made the decision not to release it in any form, even after the leak.¹⁵

Congress had initially endowed the FCDA with the responsibility of providing “a plan of civil defense for the protection of life and property in the United States from attack” in the FCD Act of 1950. Though both were under the control of the Executive Office, the Gaither Committee did not have any members from the FCDA, nor any other government department or agency. Eisenhower was looking outside the FCDA for policy advise on passive defense, outside the organization that was charged with that very responsibility. In addition, Holifield’s House Subcommittees of 1956 and 1957 accelerated the political death of the FCDA by attempting to usurp the same civil defense policy making decisions (and by later trying to reorganize the federal civil defense program), which left the public to wonder who was really the national civil defense authority.¹⁶

In addition to questioning the authority of the FCDA endowed by the FCD Act of 1950, the two committees had an even more disastrous effect by formally raising questions about the soundness of the FCDA’s policies and planning. The FCDA worked

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 138-141.

¹⁶Holifield’s second House Subcommittee hearings were on “bills to reorganize civil defense functions of the federal government” and “to establish a federal Department of Civil Defense.” U.S., House, Subcommittee of the Committee on Government Operations, New Civil Defense Legislation: Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Government Operations, 85th Cong., 1st sess., February 5 - March 7, 1957, I.

very hard in its first six years of existence to establish itself as a professional and competent government organization, one that was capable of handling civil defense planning. This strategy helped it to earn the attention, respect and confidence of Americans. Eisenhower had recognized the importance of this when he invited the FCDA Administrator “to attend and participate fully in National Security Council meetings in which matters relevant to civil defense are discussed.” Shortly after, in a 17 July 1956 letter to Val Peterson, Eisenhower said that: “The prestige and effectiveness of the Federal Civil Defense Administration must be equal to the heavy responsibility it holds.”¹⁷

However, the report “Civil Defense for National Survival” issued by Chet Holifield’s 1956 House Subcommittee, along with Holifield’s public comments and interviews and follow-up hearings on civil defense, clearly diminished the prestige of the FCDA, which ultimately undermined the public’s confidence in it and rendered it ineffective. According to Snead, Holifield “subjected the FCDA . . . to the most vigorous criticism.” Holifield’s opening remarks at the 1956 House Subcommittee hearing began with such criticism and set the tone for the hearing:

There is a widespread belief in the country that civil defense is either futile against sudden massive assaults with nuclear weapons, or is hopelessly inadequate under present arrangements. Whichever is the case, the members of this subcommittee are convinced that it is about time that the people of this Nation are informed and an intelligent course of action formed.

¹⁷Public Papers, Eisenhower, 1956, 601.

McEnaney reviewed the report issued from these hearings and said that “by shining a light on poorly conceived evacuation plans,” Holifield excited public discussion and anxiety about an attack.¹⁸

The Gaither Committee Report leaks only added to public concern over the FCDA and to the damage already inflicted by Holifield and came at an inopportune time for the FCDA. Public anxiety was mounting over the recent flight by the Soviet Union of an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) and the launching of *Sputnik I*, October 1957. This undermined public confidence in the FCDA’s evacuation plan. The public’s immediate reaction was to believe that it would be impossible to evacuate major metropolitan areas in the half hour it took for a nuclear warhead to be delivered via ICBM. The opinions in the Gaither Committee Report revealed the Committee felt the United States was poorly prepared to meet a Soviet attack. It contained opinions about both active and passive defense, such as one stating: “Passive defense programs now in being and programmed for the future will afford no significant protection of the civil population.” When this type of analysis was leaked to and printed by the press, public confidence in the FCDA as it existed was severely damaged.¹⁹

In 1955, the media first began its timid assault on the FCDA after the 16 February 1955 release of the AEC’s report on fallout. One of the sharpest critics was Gene Marine

¹⁸House, Subcommittee of the Committee on Government Operations, Civil Defense for National Survival, part 1, 1; McEnaney, Civil Defense Begins at Home, 57. For examples of Holifield’s public comments and interviews, see “Program Lags,” NYT, 2 February 1956, 10; “Evacuation Obsolete,” NYT, 14 February 1957 or Ralph E. Lapp, “Civil Defense Shelters: An Interview with Congressman Chet Holifield,” Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists 14 (April 1958): 130-134.

¹⁹Joint Committee on Defense Production, Deterrence and Survival in the Nuclear Age, 16.

of The Nation.²⁰ In his 5 February 1955 article “Still No Place to Hide: A-Bomb Defense Fizzles,” Marine his criticized the FCDA’s civil defense plan of evacuation, as well as the classified status of much of the information on fallout. He concluded by saying: “But as of now the state of our defense is such that we can neither avoid being hit nor get off the floor after the blow. There is not only no place to hide; the age of hiding and hitting back is over.” Two years later, Marine wrote another article, titled “Our Stupid Civil Defense,” that bashed Val Peterson and the FCDA’s civil defense planning, as well as that of his home city, San Francisco.²¹

In his second article, Marine criticized the FCDA for many of the same things, but paid particular attention to the lack of fallout shelters. He pointed out that: “The only FCDA shelter program is an occasional statement urging the public to build (and pay for) its own shelters.” He seemed dumbfounded by “the subcommittee report,” which revealed that Peterson “has never asked for shelter funds.” Marine made no mention, of course, of the FCDA’s initial three requests for funds, under Caldwell, to match state money for shelter construction which Congress flatly turned down. Moreover, Marine must have missed or simply chose to ignore the big story in December 1956 that the FCDA had submitted a \$15-35 billion plan for a shelter program, which was the New

²⁰I selected the following articles from The Nation after reading on its website the “founding prospectus”, prominently displayed, which is “The Nation will not be the organ of any party, sect, or body. It will, on the contrary, make an earnest effort to bring to the discussion of political and social questions a really critical spirit, and to wage war upon the vices of violence, exaggeration, and *misrepresentation* [emphasis mine] by which so much of the political writing of the day is marred.” “About The Nation,” Available [Online]: <<http://www.thenation.com/about/>> [11 February, 2001].

²¹“AEC Releases Fallout Report,” NYT, 16 February 1955, 1,18; Gene Marine, “Still No Place to Hide: A-Bomb Defense Fizzles,” The Nation, 5 February 1955, 118; Gene Marine, “Our Stupid Civil Defense: Playing Politics with National Survival,” The Nation, 9 February 1957, 111-115.

York Times front page story. Marine's article also did not acknowledge that Peterson began to conditionally support many of Holifield's Subcommittees recommendations, like equal federal and state responsibility, and that his agency had already submitted to Eisenhower for "a very far reaching program for the development of shelters on a national basis."²²

In addition to Marine's article, The Nation printed a follow-up editorial in September 1957 titled "Civil Defense is Dead." Its author, an unidentified editor, rendered Marine's last article, complaining about "Our Stupid Civil Defense," obsolete as a result of the Soviet's ICBM report. It sarcastically celebrated what the author felt was the death of the FCDA: "And to all the people who have been worrying because the stumbling procedures of the Federal Civil Defense Authority [*sic*] left them uncertain and unprepared, the ICBM brings a paradoxical note of cheer: You don't have to worry any more."²³

Articles that were skeptical or critical also appeared in other magazines and journals. An editorial in The Christian Century was particularly critical. In April 1955, the editor discussed the FCDA's continual use of "every possible device know to the occult art of public relations" to rouse the people, but now proclaimed its efforts a failure. The editor claimed the average American was moved to inaction because of a hopeless combination of the warning time available and "the sort of war he has been told it will be." A November 1955 article in Today's Health revealed one psychiatrist's view on

²²Gene Marine, "Our Stupid Civil Defense," 113; "Plan Submitted," NYT, 30 November 1956, 1; House, Subcommittee of the Committee on Government Operations, New Civil Defense Legislation, 258.

²³"Civil Defense is Dead," The Nation, 28 September 1957, 186.

why the FCDA's evacuation planning was unrealistic. Based on Dr. Jost A. M. Merloo's experiences with civil defense in the Netherlands and England during World War II, he revealed his belief that: "The very fact of evacuation and separation [from one's home and belongings], the insecurity of future shelter, the massing together of refugees along the roads of escape – these factors in themselves are panic provoking." The FCDA had vigorously worked to combat such a reaction through its public education program.²⁴

Magazines like The American Mercury, The Reader's Digest, Harper's Magazine, and The American City all also ran articles that were highly critical of the FCDA and its civil defense plans. The articles in The American Mercury and The Reader's Digest, for example, were two scathingly critical articles. The authors rehashed the same arguments raised by local and state officials about rush-hour problems and their negation of proposed evacuation, while the authors' real intent seemed only to try to rouse disdain and condemnation of the FCDA. Kane Campbell's article in The American Mercury basically criticized the evacuation policy by calling it "silly." It ended with a nonsensical suggestion in question form about why the FCDA, which it referred to as the OCD, "doesn't use some of its money to teach people what we are up against is not just a matter of politics, or a scholarly debate on ideologies, but the need to save our very skins?" This was an attempt to say that if the FCDA convinced the AEC to release all of its top secret information about fallout, instead of working on plans to move people from cities facing attack, people would be able to better take care of themselves.²⁵

²⁴"The People Aren't Fooled," The Christian Century, 6 April 1955, 415-416; Jost A. M. Merloo, "Chance, Human Nature and Civil Defense," Today's Health, November 1955, 18.

²⁵Kane Campbell, "The Silliness in Civilian Defence [*sic*]," The American Mercury, August 1956, 19-25; Paul Jones, "Nonsense in Civil Defense," Reader's Digest,

The Paul Jones article in The Reader's Digest also criticized evacuation, but mainly because he believed “. . . civil defense does not mean saving as many lives as possible, at any cost. It means training a beleaguered population to take maximum cover, while standing by its machines and workshops, its communications and transportation networks, and its vital supply system.” He continued: “What they [those standing by their machines] need from official sources is elementary instruction in rescue work, fire control . . .” Jones did not acknowledge any of the training courses taught and technical and instructional bulletins produced by the FCDA. Nor did he recognize the FCDA's volunteer recruitment program designed to assign these specific tasks to willing individuals. Again, the author's intent seemed to be to provoke an emotional response, but it was for reasons opposite of Campbell's.

Large circulation news magazines like Newsweek and Time also ran articles that raised concerns about the FCDA's civil defense planning, though subtly, but they also gave space to Holifield's position and presented the side of the FCDA. “Facts of a ‘Farce’” appeared in Newsweek in 1955. The 28 February article asked this question: “In light of the Atomic Energy Commission's report on the H-bomb, how effectively is the nation's civil defense set-up operating?” The answer was Holifield's “A farce.” The article continued to reveal that Holifield predicted if the current civil defense situation did not change, the United States was facing “a nuclear Pearl Harbor,” one of the new catch phrases of civil defense critics. The article did point out, however, that the FCDA had worked hard to train people in civil defense techniques, “but each time they learn how to

October 1955, 30-32; Robert Moses, “The Civil Defense Fiasco,” Harper's Magazine, November 1957, 29-34; “Crisis in Urban Civil Defense,” The American City, November 1956, 171-172, 185.

cope with one weapon, a new weapon comes along to make their training more or less obsolete.”²⁶

Another Newsweek article, “Civil Defense: So Much to Be Done,” and a Time article, “Civil Defense: Best Defense? Prayer,” both realistically covered “Operation Alert 1955.” The title of each article accurately reflected their tone. Both articles reviewed Eisenhower’s reaction to the test and his realization that more work still needed to be done. They both quoted his sincere message that all Americans needed to pray that war would never come. The Time article also raised concerns about how Eisenhower’s secret retreat from Washington was known by families who waited along the route. The Newsweek article, however, even included the FCDA’s Administrator’s response that he was very pleased with the exercise and glad to have learned some crucial information, such as where civil defense communications were likely to break down.²⁷

Coverage and criticism of civil defense also extended beyond United States newspapers and magazines. Articles in the Soviet press frequently focused criticism on the fear and paranoia created in the United States by civil defense training and programs. In addition, the civil defense program gave the Soviet press another opportunity to portray the leaders of the United States as “warmongers” who were prepared to sacrifice their populations. One article appearing in Pravda revealed to Soviet readers: “The American military budget is being inflated with the help of war hysteria, artificial panic and piratical blackmail.” These sentiments ironically echoed concerns the creators of the FCDA and the FCDA both sought to overcome. They were also very similar to the issues

²⁶“Facts of a ‘Farce,’” Newsweek, 28 February 1955, 20.

²⁷“Civil Defense: So Much to Be Done,” Newsweek, 27 June 1955, 21-22; “Civil Defense: Best Defense? Prayer,” Time, 27 June 1955, 17-18.

raised by a few groups in the United States, like the Quakers, which boycotted civil defense on the principle that it promoted war, not peace.²⁸

All of these articles are representative of the negative barrage of public attention the FCDA received from 1955 to 1958, but they are also evidence that the FCDA was successful in raising awareness about the dangers of nuclear war. While many of the points raised about the state of preparedness of the American people and the civil defense plans the FCDA followed were certainly valid, they fall outside the point of this study because it was and still is impossible to prepare adequately to survive a nuclear war. They are only significant because they were both a reflection of how attitudes toward civil defense changed, as well as being fuel for those changes.

In its battle to combat public apathy, the FCDA was successful only in motivating people to learn about civil defense and agreeing in theory to personally do something to prepare themselves, their families and their communities for an attack. Public polling data from the 1950s demonstrates both of these successes, but it also reveals that the FCDA did not succeed in getting the population to actually take the necessary steps for protection. The polls that reveal this information were based on questions about people's knowledge about civil defense and nuclear weapons, how likely they believed there would be an attack, how they felt about volunteering to help with civil defense preparations, and what preparations they had actually made. Polls concerning people's knowledge of nuclear weapons and what protection measures they could take were conducted the least. The most useful polls were conducted at the request of the FCDA by

²⁸Yuri Zhukov, "On the Threshold," *Pravda*, 1 January 1951, 4; Dmitri Zaslavsky, "Dog Tags for Children," *Pravda*, 21 October 1951, 3; "Civil Defense and Peace: A Quaker View," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 13 (May 1957): 176.

the Survey Research Center (SRC) of the University of Michigan, but the last year these polls were taken was 1954. They are still useful, however, to analyze how well the public knowledge was increased by FCDA's public education program, assuming that once people personally digested the information, the FCDA had accomplished its goal.

As reviewed in Chapter III, in September 1950, before the FCDA was created in December, the SRC conducted a poll in eleven major cities, later ones deemed "critical target areas," that revealed only 62% of the population in those cities had heard or read anything about personal and family civil defense protection methods. In August 1951 the numbers had risen to 87%. In 1952, when the FCDA was still focusing its program in critical target areas, the same question was asked to "an accurate cross-section of some 97 million people" in areas throughout the United States. It showed that 63% of those people had some knowledge of protection methods. By 1954, 78% had some knowledge. This shows that a successful public education program on civil defense methods was conducted by the FCDA.²⁹

In addition to teaching people about how to protect themselves, the FCDA also worked to instruct people on the dangers posed by atomic and hydrogen weapons. This early polling data reveals that the FCDA was having noticeable success in helping people realize the threat of atomic weapons. Of particular significance is the continuation observed in knowledge about the mortality radius of atomic bombs versus hydrogen bombs. In 1952, 32% of people surveyed believed an atomic bomb will kill the most people within a 5 mile radius, an accurate answer based on the FCDA's 1952 Planning Assumptions. In March 1954, after the release of the "Operation Ivy" film, 33% of those

²⁹Annual Report of 1951, 9; Annual Report of 1952, 42-43; Annual Report of 1954, 82.

surveyed knew that a hydrogen bomb would kill people beyond a twenty mile radius. In April 1952, when polled this question: "From what you've heard, what causes the most deaths in an atomic attack?" 19% responded with radiation/rays, 20% with blast/concussion/explosion, and 21% with heat/the flash/fire. In March 1954, the percentages of those responding with the same answers were 37%, 29% and 19% respectively. In addition, 26% also responded with falling buildings/debris/flying object, compared with 5% in 1952. In 1954, however, 64% of the total population mentioned two causes. Double mentions were not recorded in 1952. Unfortunately there is no data to reflect how the population's knowledge of the dangers of weapons continued to increase beyond 1954.³⁰

With respect to the danger of attack the population perceived, the SRC asked "If war were to break out, do you think people in the U.S. would be in danger of enemy [Soviet] attack?" In April 1952, 86% of respondents said yes and 84% said yes in March 1954. Of those who said yes, 34% believed people in their community were in danger (an additional 9% said yes, but less than big cities). In 1954, 50% believed the same (6% additional said yes, but less than big cities).³¹

In July 1953, a Gallup Poll asked people: "In case of a war, how much chance do you think there is of this community (city) being attacked *with atom bombs* [emphasis mine] – a good chance, a fair chance, or not much chance?" Overall 32% said "a good chance," 24% said "a fair chance," and 37% said "not much chance." However, when broken down by community sizes of 100,000 and over, 10,000 to 100,000 and under

³⁰Annual Report of 1954, 79-81.

³¹*Ibid.*, 78.

10,000, those responding with “a good chance” were 44%, 37%, and 20% respectively. The percentage of those responding with “not much chance” were 37%, 29% and 48% respectively.³²

In July 1956, an American Institute of Public Opinion (AIPO) poll asked: “Do you think where you live would be wiped out if there should be another world war and hydrogen bombs are used?” Respondents answered this way: 38% believed they lived in an area that would be safe, while 43% believed they were unsafe in their area. A similar poll in 1961 by the same Institute divided responses into geographic regions. In the East, 60% believed the Russians would want to bomb their locality; 59% in the Midwest, 31% in the South and 67% in the Far West believed the same. These questions were contingent upon a predetermined state of war. Americans felt much safer if there was not a war.³³

Seventy percent of respondents to an August 1953 Gallup Poll did *not* believe that the Soviet Union would be able “to knock out the United States with a surprise all-out atom and hydrogen bomb attack.” Twenty-one percent believed the Soviets could. The same percent of Americans did not believe this would happen in April 1955 AIPO poll; the percentage of those who believed this could happen was 20% . The same 1955 AIPO poll asked this question: “Do you think Russia has the edge on the U.S. in atom bombs and hydrogen bombs?” Again, Americans expressed their confidence as 77% responded by saying “no,” while only 9% said “yes.”³⁴

³²Gallup, The Gallup Poll, 2: 1162.

³³Erskine, “The Polls,” 159.

³⁴Gallup, The Gallup Poll, 2: 1147; Erskine, “The Polls,” 176-177.

While the United States still had a monopoly on atomic weapons in March 1949, 48% of Americans believed “the atom bomb has made another world war less likely,” while 25% believed it was “more likely.” Another AIPO poll in December 1949 asked respondents “Now that Russia has the atom bomb, do you think another war is more likely or less likely?” Forty-five percent of respondents believed war was “more likely,” while 28% believed it was “less likely.” In July 1954, another question by the AIPO was asked concerning the likelihood of war based on the existence of hydrogen bombs. Sixty-five percent of Americans now believed war was “less likely,” while only 10% believed it was “more likely.”³⁵

Americans’ willingness to support civil defense preparations became consistent with the threat they perceived in the event of a war. The polling conducted by the SRC showed that in April 1952, 39% of respondents said “yes” to the question: “If you were asked to sign up to give two or three hours a week for at least six months learning about civil defense, would you do it?” Twenty-one answered with a qualified “yes.” By April 1955, the SRC found those who responded with “yes” had risen to 55%, with an additional 13% again qualifying their “yes,” indicating two-thirds of Americans were open to the idea of committing some of their time to civil defense training. An August 1956 Gallup Poll asked respondents: “Would you approve or disapprove of a plan to require every man and woman to spend an average of one hour a week in civil defense work?” Sixty-four percent answered they would approve, while only 23% disagreed. By

³⁵Erskine, “The Polls,” 183.

November 1961, 62% of people were still willing to work a day or two on weekends to help in the construction a public fallout shelter.³⁶

Though polling shows the majority of the population was aware of the dangers posed by nuclear weapons and expressed a willingness to engage in civil defense preparedness, the amount of people who actually did so was much, much lower. When asked in June 1950 of those who had thought they or their families “would be in possible danger from a bomb attack in case of another war” (58% of respondents), 17% thought of moving to the country to avoid danger, 15% thought of going to air raid shelters or basements or building shelters, and 3% thought they would “organize now to meet the danger.” In April 1954, only 5% had given “serious thought to moving elsewhere” to escape the danger.³⁷

In July 1953, a Gallup poll found that 93% of respondents were not doing any work in the civil defense program. The remaining 7% were either involved or had signed up to be. An April 1960 poll showed that 79% of respondents had not “given any thought to building a home bomb shelter.” It also showed that 50% of respondents would be unwilling to pay under \$500 to have one built their families.³⁸

By July 1961, only 5% of respondents said yes, they “made any changes in [their] home to protect [themselves] in case of a nuclear weapons attack by the enemy.” However, when asked specifically about food storage for that kind of emergency, 20%

³⁶Annual Report of 1954, 89; Gallup, The Gallup Poll, 2: 1445.

³⁷Erskine, “The Polls,” 159-160.

³⁸Gallup, The Gallup Poll, 2: 1162, 1671.

had actually made this preparation. A September 1961 question: "Have you made any plans or given any thought to preparing your home in case of a nuclear attack?" showed a resounding 93% had not even thought of making any preparations.³⁹

³⁹*Ibid.*, 2:1732, 1741

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The Congressional hearings chaired by Chet Holifield and the studies conducted by the Gaither Committee, the RAND Corporation and the later Rockefeller Fund put a good deal of pressure on Eisenhower and the FCDA. All of these sources demanded some type of change to the existing civil defense planning in the United States. Since the FCDA was under the Executive Office and its Administrator reported directly to the President, Eisenhower was left to make the decisions on what type of changes to make. He had to consider both the public and political stir created by these investigations into national civil defense preparedness, as well as his own beliefs about national security.

By May of 1958, Eisenhower had rejected the recommendations for a massive public shelter campaign, for diplomatic, as well as economic reasons. He instead approved a five-point National Shelter Policy, which was again predicated upon the principal responsibility of individuals and families and the FCDA's role as leader. The FCDA's new administrator, Leo Hoegh, announced the policy on 7 May 1958.¹

The National Shelter Policy included a pledge by the FCDA: "The Administration will bring to every American all of the facts as to the possible effects from nuclear attack, and inform him of the steps which he and his State and local governments can take to minimize such effects." In addition, the FCDA promised to help state and local governments to evaluate the amount of fallout protection afforded by existing structures, as well as how to incorporate fallout shelters into new construction.

¹Annual Report for 1958, 7.

The FCDA aimed to continue to provide leadership and guidance, as well as to lead by example by incorporating fallout shelters into new federal buildings.²

The National Shelter Policy represented the only compromise that Eisenhower was willing to allow the FCDA to make, though in reality it was not a shift in its guiding principle of self-help, but simply an acknowledgment of the usefulness of shelters. Despite the clamor since Americans began to fully understand the dangers of hydrogen weapons, the FCDA stated plainly in the National Shelter Policy that: “There will be no massive federally-financed shelter construction program. . . . Common prudence requires that the Federal Government take steps to assist each American to *prepare himself* [emphasis mine] . . . ‘The Administration believes that when the American people fully understand the problem that confronts them, they will rise to meet the challenge, as they have invariably done in the past.’” Hoegh also included in his announcement a statement saying that this was the policy that Eisenhower wanted.³

The other major political concern that Eisenhower sought to address was the organization of civil defense planning. Holifield’s hearings had raised significant criticism about the ineffective organization of civil defense planning in the United States, taken also as a criticism of Eisenhower’s administration. In the mounting commotion after *Sputnik I* and the leak of the Gaither Committee Report, Eisenhower tried to answer concerns about American safety by reorganizing the structure of passive defense.

Most of the technical problems Holifield’s Subcommittee raised about the FCDA concerned efficiency. Appropriations committees often found overlapping budget

²*Ibid.*, 8-9.

³*Ibid.*, 9.

requests between the various federal agencies and departments that the FCDA delegated civil defense responsibilities. In addition, another federal agency, the Office of Defense Mobilization (ODM), created at the same time as the FCDA in December 1950, and the FCDA sometimes had overlapping responsibilities with respect to mobilizing for defense and planning for civilian defense.

To address these problems that Eisenhower acknowledged, as well as that of public confidence problem discussed in the previous chapter, Eisenhower initiated "Reorganization Plan 1 of 1958." Eisenhower transmitted the Plan to Congress thirteen days prior to the release of the National Shelter Policy. However, Eisenhower alluded to major changes in the organization of civil defense in his 13 January 1958 budget message, only weeks after the Gaither Committee Report leaks.⁴

Eisenhower stated: "Under the plan, the broad program responsibilities for coordinating and conducting the inter-related defense mobilization and civil defense functions will be vested in the President for appropriate delegation as the rapidly changing character of nonmilitary preparedness program warrants." To combat what Eisenhower believed to be an unbalanced ability to oversee both civil defense and other passive defense programs, Eisenhower joined the FCDA and the ODM in one office under the president, the Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization (OCDM) on 1 July, 1958. This agency lasted a full three years when its responsibilities were again divided between two new agencies: the Office of Civil Defense and the Office of Emergency Planning.⁵

⁴Public Papers, Eisenhower, 1958, 346.

⁵*Ibid.*, 347.

By using the information on the FCDA's public education program, the review of how changes in weapons technology affected the FCDA's planning, the polling data from Chapter Four, as well as the conditions under which the FCDA ceased to exist as a federal agency, it is possible to assess how successful the FCDA was through its public education program. The basis for this analysis is how well the FCDA was able to do what early civil defense theory dictated during the time of the FCDA's creation: to create a well informed public in order to minimize the ability of the enemy to use the "psychological implications" of nuclear warfare to defeat the United States. It is clear that the FCDA's public education program successfully accomplished this. What will forever remain unknowable is the soundness of the civil defense theory. While the public's rising anxiety as it learned of the dangers of nuclear weapons may or may not disprove the civil defense theory, it serves as a positive indicator that the FCDA had an undeniable leading role in creating a well informed and interested public.

However, the FCDA's public education program was aimed at more than simply providing information to the public; it also wanted to motivate people to use the information provided through the FCDA to prepare themselves and the nation to survive and recover from attack. This went beyond the initial reason for the creation of the FCDA, but was something that was outlined in the FCD Act of 1950. At this task, the FCDA was much less successful. It was not able to motivate people to actually do something to ensure their and their families safety. The FCDA provided the public with reasons to and information on how to do this, but it, like its predecessors, was unable to rally the entire population of the United States to become a prepared body.

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