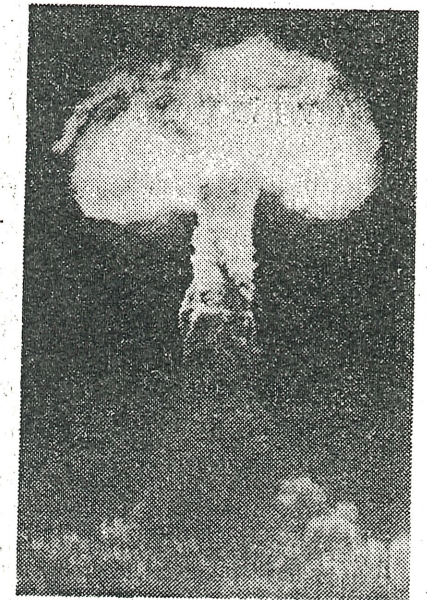


The risk of radioactive fallout reaching this country and the threat of a nuclear winter are downplayed in a Planning Council study entitled "New Zealand After Nuclear War," released today. But it sees other problems and calls for planning to reduce their impact.



NZ can survive nuclear conflict, says expert

New Zealand as we know it is more likely to end with a whimper than a bang if there is a nuclear war, according to a study released by the Planning Council today.

But it also argues that New Zealand need not end at all if sufficient planning is done.

The study — "New Zealand After Nuclear War" — was paid for using money handed over by France in compensation for the "Rainbow Warrior" bombing.

It looks at New Zealand in the

**By Simon Kilroy,
NZN news bureau**

Zealand imports about one-fifth of wheat consumed annually.

"Loss of grain and vegetable production would be heaviest in cooler southern regions."

But one immediate effect which could hit New Zealand is an electromagnetic pulse which would have dire consequences — consequences most New Zealanders are unaware of, according to the study.



other problems and calls for planning to reduce impact.

Christchurch Star
24.8.87 (Page 2)

NZ can survive nuclear conflict, says expert

New Zealand as we know it is more likely to end with a whimper than a bang if there is a nuclear war, according to a study released by the Planning Council today.

But it also argues that New Zealand need not end at all if sufficient planning is done.

The study — "New Zealand After Nuclear War" — was paid for using money handed over by France in compensation for the "Rainbow Warrior" bombing.

It looks at New Zealand in the wake of a nuclear war which does not see any bombs dropped on the country, and most of the action taking place in the Northern Hemisphere.

It suggests New Zealand could escape largely physically unharmed from such a war.

Survey

A survey carried out for the study showed nearly half the people questioned thought the most serious consequence of a nuclear war for New Zealand would be nuclear fallout.

But the study says that would not be a major problem.

Because of weather patterns and the way radioactive fallout behaves New Zealand would only receive a small amount.

The head researcher, Dr Wren

**By Simon Kilroy,
NZN news bureau**

Zealand imports about one-fifth of wheat consumed annually.

"Loss of grain and vegetable production would be heaviest in cooler southern regions."

But one immediate effect which could hit New Zealand is an electromagnetic pulse which would have dire consequences — consequences most New Zealanders are unaware of, according to the study.

The effect is caused by nuclear explosions at high altitudes, and the study says there is a possibility of such an explosion over Australia to destroy military installations there, with its effects spilling over to New Zealand.

An EMP is a power surge lasting about a millionth of a second.

It does not damage people, usually, but destroys electrical equipment.

Some of the most vulnerable systems would be telecommunications networks, radio and television networks and receivers, computer networks, control equipment operating sensitive plant such as oil refineries, health care facilities and transport facilities, the study says.

An EMP could also knock out all electrical supplies by destroying transmission systems.

Dr Green says the effects of an EMP on New Zealand would be



Victims seek refuge in a makeshift hospital after the nuclear devastation of Kansas City in this scene from the film, "The Day After." A Planning Council study paints a different picture for New Zealand.

From
SOS,
PROJ
ACC
the
Ror
Lo
du
lea
PR
on
pe
d
w
n
S
a
t
n
t

be a major problem.

Because of weather patterns and the way radioactive fallout behaves New Zealand would only receive a small amount.

The head researcher, Dr Wren Green, says "there would be such a small amount of radioactive fallout reaching New Zealand, even if Australia were bombed, that there would be, say, a 1 per cent rise in the cases of cancer over several decades.

"This is not a large number and they would not all be fatal."

The study also downplays the big fear of the past couple of years — nuclear winter.

It says New Zealand would not "experience rapid and substantial temperature drops given its distance from combatant countries.

"The perception that 'nuclear winter' effects would be similiar around the globe is false."

It estimates drops in New Zealand temperatures of only a few degrees.

Although that would reduce food production, New Zealand's population would not be in danger of starving because of that, "given the huge surplus of production over levels of local consumption," the study says.

"Livestock would not be at direct risk because pasture growth should still be sufficient for stock to survive.

"Important vegetable crops would still grow in most regions, although some crops could be reduced significantly by unseasonal frosts.

"Loss of wheat crops could be the most serious shortage because even at times of full production New

refineries, health care facilities and transport facilities, the study says.

An EMP could "knock out all electrical supplies by destroying transmission systems.

Dr Green says the effects of an EMP on New Zealand would be catastrophic, but also points out an EMP is not as likely an occurrence as nuclear war itself.

But even if New Zealand escaped the effects of an EMP, life in the post-nuclear war age would be grim.

Society would be completely dislocated, he says.

In the first weeks after the war there would be "severe psychological pressures," according to the study.

"The destruction of so much of humanity, the deaths of hundreds of millions of people in combatant countries and the abrupt loss of ties with people in other countries would overwhelm many with traumatic feelings of loss and dislocation."

Possible runs on food stocks, efforts of families to be re-united and fears of fallout and New Zealand being targeted by nuclear weapons would add to the immediate confusion and problem, the study says.

"In coping with all these disruptions New Zealanders would have to make the greatest number of changes in lifestyle, social institutions and economic activity of any similar period in the country's history," it says.

"A psychologically battered nation would be faced with structural problems it would be difficult to resolve even in 'normal' circumstances."

Victims seek refuge in a makeshift hospital after the nuclear devastation of Kansas City in this scene from the film, "The Day After." A Planning Council study paints a different picture for New Zealand.

Shortages would begin to bite as New Zealand found itself having to go it alone.

Health

One area where problems would show up early is the health system.

New Zealand depends on imports for virtually 100 per cent of the drugs and medical equipment used here.

"Without these imports the present health system would have to undergo drastic changes within a year," the study says.

It suggest society might have to return to the standards of health which were the norm 50 years ago, with degenerative diseases of old age, such as arthritis and cancer, running their natural course.

Diabetics, asthmatics, people with heart disease and others suffering from chronic illnesses would also be affected.

As vaccines ran out diptheria, tetanus, measles, polio and TB would begin stalking the country once again.

The end of the supply of oral contraceptives would mean an increase in the number of unwanted pregnancies and more demand for abortions.

The energy supply would also gradually wind down as technology dependent on imported components broke down.

Cars would break down and could not be repaired as irreplaceable parts such as batteries, spark plugs and tyres wore out.

Other hi-tech items such as electronic telephones exchanges, electronic typewriters and computers would also gradually break down irreparably.

A nuclear war would also have drastic effects on the economy.

Dr Green says up to 40 per cent of the population could expect to lose their jobs if there was no exporting to and importing from the Northern Hemisphere.

"In recent years unemployment has reached around 5 per cent; in the Depression of the 1930s it peaked at about 12 per cent.

"It is difficult to imagine the catastrophic impact of unemployment levels four times greater than in the Depression, even if New Zealand's social structure coped with all the other impacts of nuclear war."

Refugees

The other problem New Zealand might face after a nuclear war is waves of refugees seeking to escape the worse effects elsewhere.

"Many of them could be carrying diseases and have various degrees of radiation sickness," the study says.

Dr Green will not be drawn on how long the gradual disintegration of New Zealand society would take.

"It would have been tempting to do that, but we resisted the temptation," he says.

A lot would depend on how New Zealanders reacted.

The decline could be slowed if everyone rallied round, with engineering firms, for example, working hard to pump out replacements for imported goods.

He believes if that happened New Zealand could keep going, albeit with a lower standard of living.

"It's not inevitable everything would end."

On the other hand, everyone could give up and just go home, in which case the decline would be rapid, he says.

The study recommends the Government tries to avoid that happening by acting now.

It suggests programmes to improve the public's knowledge of the likely impacts of nuclear war on New Zealand, the drawing up of contingency plans for action if war did occur and action now to make New Zealand less vulnerable to the effects of nuclear war.

Most of the information New Zealanders get now relates to what would happen in the Northern Hemisphere and they should know that the effects here would be very different, the study says.

Contingency plans for coping if there were a nuclear war should also be discussed and made public, covering such things as priorities for the use of limited resources such as medicines and who should be taking the decisions after a nuclear war.

Measures

New Zealand should also consider making itself less vulnerable to the effects of nuclear war, by considering taking measures to protect some systems against the effects of an EMP and to become more self-sufficient in things such as medical supplies.

It recommends setting up a specialist unit for a limited period.

"The specialist unit could prepare material for public information, co-ordinate continuing scientific investigation, initiate the development of contingency plans and investigate the feasibility of reducing import vulnerabilities."

But preparing for the aftermath of nuclear war is very much a second best option for the authors of the study.

They end by saying that any effort put into preparing for such a war be matched by an effort to make sure it does not happen.

"For while survival may be preferable to death, life without the nuclear threat will always be the most important goal."

Christchurch Star
24.8.87 (Part 3)