

NZ without nuclear-war contingency plan

Impact on nation would be 'severe'



Dr. Hawke . . . A starting point

No contingency plans have been made in New Zealand to deal with a nuclear war, a Planning Council report released today reveals.

New Zealand After Nuclear War, a six-month study which investigated the effects of nuclear war on New Zealand, found that the impact of a war on the Government, and its ability to operate, would be extremely severe.

Planning council chairman Professor Gary Hawke said the study was commissioned by the Government as a starting point

for deciding the best form of planning to undertake.

One of the report's recommendations was that a specialist unit be set up to prepare material for public information, co-ordinate continuing scientific investigation and to initiate the development of contingency plans.

The report emphasised that, while research was necessary, it was vitally important to make the results available and accessible to the general public.

"General understanding of what is likely to happen if nuclear war occurs allows an informed

Planning council six-month study

public debate, which is necessary both for effective prevention and for effective responses if prevention fails," the report said.

Principal researcher Dr Wren Green said, if there was a war the effect on society would depend very much on the "level of preparedness of government."

Crucial decisions would have to be made in the immediate crisis period, and the report doubted the Government's ability to cope.

"With Government's current lack of preparedness, it is doubtful the people responsible would be able to cope.

"As individuals, they would be under severe stress, and the systems (such as telecommunications) and structures they depend on might not be able to withstand the pressure," Dr Green said.

Police and the defence department would look to the government for information and instructions.

"Without prior plans, government would have enormous difficulty in knowing what to do, and

every hour of uncertainty could lead to greater panic and chaos," he said.

The report said contingency plans for key sectors and systems would play a major role in reducing uncertainty and disruption if nuclear war occurred.

Preparing plans now would be useful in identifying weaknesses in current practices.

"For example, is it only cost that prevents the production of medicines in New Zealand?

"To what extent does present use of local energy resources take account of uncertainty in future supply?" the report said. — NZPA

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Merit in unit'

Emotional propaganda had led people to believe New Zealand would be subject to the effects of a nuclear blast, opposition disarmament spokesman Mr Doug Graham said today.

"This is demonstrably wrong, and is obviously the result of much emotional propaganda ap-

pearing almost daily in this country."

He described the Planning Council report on the likely impact of nuclear war on New Zealand as a "rational analysis" showing that New Zealanders had a poor understanding of the effect on New Zealand of such a war.

He said the report should be widely read. — NZPA