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The Days After

EVEN if the world has lived with the threat of a nuclear war for more than four decades, it is surprising that New Zealand has never made any contingency plan to deal with the eventuality. While nuclear war seems no more likely now than it was earlier, it would seem logical for the country to have a master plan to deal with whatever it had to face in the event of a nuclear war in the northern hemisphere. These points are made in a Planning Council report "New Zealand After Nuclear War," a study financed by reparations made by the French Government to New Zealand after the Rainbow Warrior Affair.

The report dispels a few popular misconceptions. In the event of a nuclear war in the Northern hemisphere it concludes that New Zealand would largely escape radioactive fallout. Its problems would be social and it would be forced to its own resources, without petrol for vehicles, raw material for medicines . . . or a market for its exports. Survival would depend on ingenuity and a successful return to a pioneer mentality.

Even so, a degree of planning could lessen the eventual burdens. The report has recommended that a specialist unit be set up to prepare material for public information, co-ordinate continuing scientific investigation and to initiate development of contingency plans. It seems the least that the country can do no matter what the belief is in the likelihood of nuclear war.