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Nuclear survival planning started by Cabinet

By JANE CLIFTON
Political correspondent

Wellington.— The Cabinet has already started to formulate contingency plans for surviving nuclear war, but is likely to authorise public submissions and a second report on New Zealand's survival prospects before it makes final decisions.

Out-going Environment Minister Phil Goff has said the urgings of the Planning Council's report on New Zealand's nuclear winter chances for comprehensive contingency planning would be met, but probably not before public consultation and a more detailed "Phase II" study.

The Cabinet's domestic and external security committee has been reviewing emergency regulations and existing national disaster planning, and is likely to have the guiding hand in the ultimate contingency blueprint.

Mr Goff commended the Planning Council's report, and trumpeted the Government's courage in instigating its funding.

"The reason why there has never been a report like this before is because no government that wanted to associate New Zealand in a nuclear alliance and depend on the so-called nuclear umbrella to defend it, could afford to allow the public of New Zealand to appreciate the consequences of nuclear war."

However, he said the report's various suggestions of making New Zealand self-sufficient or stock-



PHIL GOFF . . . extensive stockpiling unlikely.

piling essential commodities were unlikely to be adopted extensively.

Stockpiling was expensive and unsuitable for goods that deteriorated. "I think more realistically we need to . . . look at whether there are substitutes available in New Zealand; whether even at some expense we could convert our redundant industries into producing the pharmaceutical and other goods we would need.

"We would need to look at how we might go about re-establishing trade in the Southern Hemisphere . . . We need to look at alternative forms of medicine.

"But I would not predict that we would make an immediate decision to start moving New Zealand towards self-sufficiency now, simply given the prospect of a nuclear war being possible."

Meanwhile, NZPA reports an Australian atmospheric scientist as predicting Australia and New Zealand would be among the countries least affected by a major nuclear war.

However, Barrie Pittock, in a book due for distribution in New Zealand next month, said Australian-United States bases could be nuclear targets.

Dr Pittock, who works in Australia's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, said both Australia and New Zealand could avoid "complicity in the contending nuclear alliances, since complicity invites nuclear attack".

"Australia and New Zealand would remain physically relatively unscathed (in a nuclear war), always assuming our cities are not targeted.

"Our economies, however, would be seriously affected, both by the rather mild nuclear winter effect and more especially by the loss of trade with the Northern Hemisphere.

"If we were to become more self-sufficient as regards liquid fuels, lubricants, fertilisers, chemicals, medicines, machine parts and electronic components, we would be able to maintain a more tolerable existence."

In the book, *Beyond Darkness: Nuclear Winter In Australia And New Zealand*, Dr Pittock also presents a picture of the aftermath of a nuclear war.

The scenario presumes that Australia and New Zealand are not directly at-

tacked, apart from the three main United States-Australian bases at North West Cape, Pine Gap and Nurrungar.

A high-altitude nuclear device detonated over Australia — to generate an electromagnetic pulse to knock out communication links at the bases — would also severely disrupt general communications and commerce.

As a result, chaos and civil conflict could develop in Australia.

If the war happened in the northern spring and summer, wisps of smoke would begin to drift overhead from the north some time in the following three weeks.

After three months, the smoke would be thick enough to prolong dawn and dusk.

The sunlight would be colder at midday and the air would become still and cold in mid-afternoon.

"Even the North Island of New Zealand would experience heavy frosts on still nights," Dr Pittock said.

"Occasionally, light falls of snow might occur even as far north as Wellington, Brisbane and Geraldton (in West Australia)."

The conditions would affect crops and livestock, and shortages would develop in fuel.

Dr Pittock, who is also a Quaker, said preparing for survival in the Southern Hemisphere should only be seen as a complementary strategy to attempts to prevent nuclear war.