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SECTION 1



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AFTER A NUCLEAR WAR

Five years ago the Commission for the Future predicted that New Zealand would survive a major nuclear war in the Northern Hemisphere. Since then a theory was advanced that a northern nuclear war would spread its dust and climatic effects to the entire globe, and as a result the extinction of the human race could not be precluded.

In 1985 the Royal Society of New Zealand was uncertain whether a nuclear winter from a northern war would reach New Zealand, but it was in no doubt that survival here would become a grim and wretched pursuit. Now the Planning Council issues a report agreeing with predictions of social chaos and disruption but asserting that, contrary to popular belief, New Zealand would receive only a minute proportion of the global fallout, even if Australia were bombed.

That much is interesting, but did New Zealand need to spend some of the French reparation money for the Rainbow Warrior on yet another rehearsal on the future of local society if it survived a northern holocaust? Such a situation is well within the imagination of people who lived here during the Second World War.

Those who were sufficiently adult at that time will be well aware of the controls, conscrip-

tion, manpowering, travel restrictions, petrol rationing, food rationing, clothing rationing, rundown of services, shortages of nearly everything — and then they can multiply it by whatever factor they think appropriate for the calamity of total cutoff from the industrial north. It is a virtual certainty that we would have a command economy even tighter than it was in the war.

No Planning Council is needed to tell us that, although it may be news to some cabinet members, of whom only a very few have wartime memories. Certainly the Government should have contingency plans for such an event, however unlikely, but there seems little point — unless it be a self-serving political boost to anti-nuclear sentiment — in once more scaring the many people who already seem excessively up-tight about the facts of the nuclear age.

If any major effort is to be directed into preparations for disaster, the country would probably be best served by improving its abilities to meet the ones most likely to happen — earthquake, flood, volcanic eruption, major fire and perhaps some others. The Government can stir its stumps on such matters, and could have done so on nuclear contingency planning, without spending money on surveys that discover the obvious.