

MediaSearch Corporation Limited  
Private Bag, Wellington 1. New Zealand  
Tel. (04) 843-609  
Fax. [Intl +64] (04) 849-126

MediaSearch are specialists in:

**Business Consulting** ■ Business Communications ■ Investor Relations ■ Business-Government Liaison  
■ Communications Audit ■ Graphic Design + Production ■ Annual Reports + All Business Publications  
■ Project Feasibility + Development ■ Science + Technology Analysis ■ Management Consultancy  
**Bureaux Services** ■ Express News Clipping Service ■ Express Press Release Preparation + National Dispatch  
■ Government and Legislation Monitoring Service

## Post-nuclear employment

Sir, — Keith Rankin's letter (September 18) criticises the Planning Council's report on the consequences of nuclear war on the ground that self-sufficiency would produce new jobs. The level of unemployment after a nuclear war depends crucially on the point in time at which you assess it. The argument that labour intensive jobs would be created is of course correct — but how long would that process of adjustment take?

Our report commented on the short-term disruption to

employment and the distribution of purchasing power. On the day we discovered that nuclear war had broken out there would be no physical reason why employment in farming and its downstream industries should decline — the sheep would still be there. But everyone would know that, say, 55 million of them would be redundant — along with all those who shear, transport, slaughter and process them, and all the accountants, retailers, shipping clerks, advertising executives etc whose incomes depend on that flow of product. That whole system of employment and purchasing power distribution would collapse and it would take sophisticated community measures to maintain those people's lives until new labour intensive industries developed. That could happen relatively quickly if we had thought about the problem in advance but could take a very long time if we hadn't.

There are of course parallels with our present economic restructuring — what we are talking about is the process of managing change. The parallel is not too close — there is surely a qualitative difference between the sudden, massive shock of nuclear war and the various slow changes in world markets which we studiously ignored during the 1960s and 70s. But implying that unemployment after nuclear war would not be a problem because new jobs would emerge, is dangerously close to the position of economic purists who claim that our present restructuring

will automatically create new jobs to replace those lost. Yes, probably and over time — but what are the mechanisms which will help us get through the restructuring phase without suffering either the irreparable social damage of long-term unemployment or the economic damage of bureaucratic decisions on investment and jobs?

PETER J. RANKIN  
Planning Council