

Nuclear winter idea defended

By MICHAEL FIELD

STRONG attacks in the United States on the scientific validity of the nuclear winter concept have not shaken New Zealand views that it is an idea still to be taken seriously.

The author and project leader of a recent Planning Council report, *New Zealand After Nuclear War*, Dr Wren Green, said yesterday the likelihood of a nuclear winter after a world war had been reasonably established.

And he endorsed Monday's call by Conservation Minister Helen Clark for the issue to be discussed at the next general assembly of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

While New Zealand could make only a limited contribution in the area of weather modelling, Dr Green said the Planning Council had done a lot of work on the social effects of nuclear war.

"Nuclear winter is a hypothesis, and it is only that. I don't use the word theory, on which a lot more attention should be paid at a policy viewpoint," he said.

Dr Green dismissed the leading critic of the concept, Harvard policy analyst Russell Seitz, as a "non-scientist".

Mr Seitz has described nuclear winter as "a pernicious fantasy" and some scientists have agreed with him.

Professor George Rathjens of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology has described nuclear winter as "the worst example of misrepresentation of science to the public in my memory".

The British journal *Nature* has said "nuclear winter . . . has become notorious for its lack of scientific integrity".

Dr Green said a February conference of the Scientific Council on Problems of the Environment agreed the concept had undergone rigorous analysis.

It had survived this study, but needed more.

"I think what people are saying after this is that the likelihood of nuclear winter has been reasonably established," he said.