

# Researcher brings nuke message

A grim message of hope is the paradox that Dr Wren Green brings to Northland.

The main researcher of the New Zealand Planning Council's "New Zealand After Nuclear War" report, Dr Green has the unenviable task of getting people "to think about the unthinkable".

He does this by relaying the impacts of nuclear war to New Zealanders in New Zealand terms.

During an overnight visit to Whangarei, Dr Green said most New Zealanders did not want to think about nuclear war because they had a northern hemisphere picture of mushroom clouds and total devastation in their heads.

In fact, he said, it would not be like that. "It is very important for us to realise that we are likely to live through a nuclear war," Dr Green said.

"When we accept that, we can also accept that we must prepare for the grim survival that will follow."

The country would be stripped of its existing support systems and isolated from the rest of the world.

There would be obvious problems with food distribution, communications, transport, health care, and immediate widespread unemployment.

The devastation would be social, rather than physical, although we

could expect a mild nuclear winter, some crop losses, and perhaps a one per cent increase in cancers over the following 70 years.

Dr Green said he could only question how New Zealand's social systems would endure the traumatic shock of loss of contact with the northern hemisphere.

Likewise, he could only question how New Zealanders would respond to their losses as people, given that our society was based increasingly on a "dog-eat-dog" basis.

"My most startling find in six months of research is how incredibly vulnerable we have become in all sorts of areas," Dr Green said.

"The idea of the do-it-yourself, fix-it-Kiwi is a myth.

"We are a disposable society. Every sector of our activity depends on imported supplies, and our social and economic structure is based on export production."

A nuclear war would fundamentally disrupt that society causing fear, panic, severe chaos and breakdown.

Despite such potential for enormous social problems, Dr Green said a nuclear war should not generate an "end of the earth" fear for New Zealanders.

"The consequences may be more under our control than we imagine," he said.

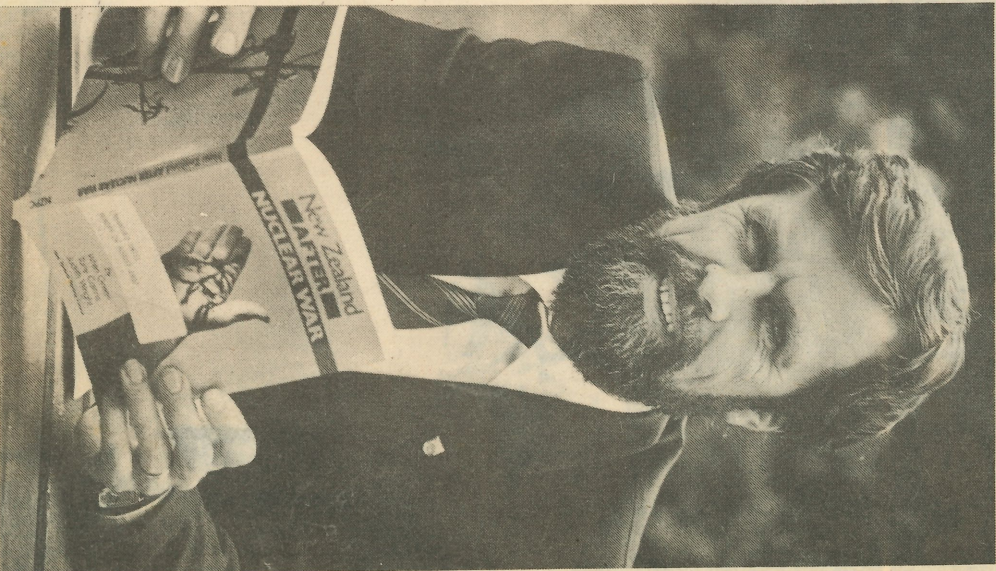
"The quality of life in post-nuclear war New Zealand will depend on strategies developed now."

Such strategies could include the retention of

early survival skills such as cheese and soap making, and moving from a diesel and petrol dependence to more CNG and LPG conversions.

Other suggestions contained in the report include the establishment of seed stocks for all important crops, and gene banks to preserve genetic material for plant breeding programmes.

Stockpiling medical equipment and spare parts could be critically important, along with more research into alternative medicines such as Maori remedies.



Dr Wren Green: "New Zealanders will live through a nuclear war, but their survival will be bleak."