

Post-nuclear plan studied

By Helen Tunnah

Non-combatant nations are as much at risk from nuclear war, but from different effects, as the super-powers.

New Zealanders would be hit with the destruction of social and economic systems, rather than the direct consequences of a nuclear war, the project leader for a Planning Council report on New Zealand after a nuclear war said today.

Dr Wren Green, of Wellington, is in Christchurch to address a public forum on the report's findings and to encourage more contingency planning.

The Ministry for the Environment has called for submissions on what further studies and actions are needed to cope with the after effects of nuclear war.

Submissions must be received by November 30, after which date the ministry will report its findings to the Government, suggesting what a second phase of investigation would involve.

Dr Green said an

estimated \$1.8m would be needed to fund the three-year second phase.

The \$125,000 cost of the Planning Council report has been met by Rainbow Warrior compensation funds.

Dr Green said New Zealanders should not think of the contingency plans as being for use only in the event of a nuclear war.

'Incidents'

"Since the report came out (in August) there have been three major incidents which we didn't think would happen.

"There was a major failure at the Motonui plant, and we had to fly in experts from the United States to clear the problem. This showed our dependence on 'think big' projects, but what if we could not fly those experts in?

"There's a rising tension in the Gulf, which has escalated the risk of super-power conflict. And there's been the hint of a global economic collapse."

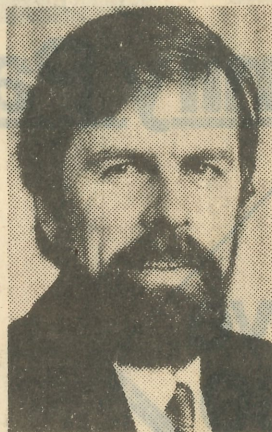
Dr Green said this country could be seriously affected by such events as regional conflicts halting shipping lines.

But if a nuclear war did hit the Northern Hemisphere, New Zealand's biggest problems would be social.

"Start with the loss of trade, 80 per cent of our overseas trade is conducted in the Northern Hemisphere; it keeps New Zealand's economy ticking over."

If this was lost, unemployment could rise to as much as 50 per cent, Dr Green said.

"But if the tax base is failing because there's no



Dr Green

money coming in, what kind of social welfare system can we offer the unemployed?"

Dr Green said such questions had not been considered before.

"We tend to assume we don't have to think of nuclear war."

More devastating to New Zealand than the after-effects would be the impact of an electro magnetic pulse (EMP).

An EMP is caused by an explosion at high altitude of a nuclear device which would disable and destroy computer, communication and electricity systems.