

Workshop on the Medical Consequences of Nuclear War

The government's statements on civil defence are deliberately misleading the public by giving the impression that we can survive a nuclear attack. E.g., 'Protect and Survive' implies that the immediate effects will not happen to you, and that within 14 days radioactive fallout will have decayed to safe levels.

There have been several seminars and meetings recently addressing the question of whether nuclear war will be survivable. Sections of the medical establishment are now saying that it is not: even if people live through the blast and firestorm, they will still emerge to find an environment severely contaminated with radioactivity. All water and food subsequently consumed will transfer radioactive elements to our bodies, and may cause cancer, genetic defects in babies born later and will decrease the body's ability to fight infection.

In a scenario of a nuclear strike on Boston it was estimated that almost 90% of the city's medical staff would either be dead or incapable of administering medical care, and most of the medical facilities would be destroyed. The civilian population would desperately need intensive medical care with nowhere to find it. Hiroshima and Nagasaki provided an appalling demonstration of this, but in our case there would be no outside world to help.

The workshop will examine the medical effects of a nuclear attack and describe the effects of radiation on health. Central to the workshop will be a video presentation of a talk given by Dr. Helen Caldicott in Edinburgh last October. Dr. Caldicott is president of the American organization, 'Physicians for Social Responsibility.'