

WOMAN'S HERALD



From the book cover of *Letters for My Children*.

IT was having to lie to her 12-year-old son that really upset Deirdre Rhys-Thomas. "Do you think there is going to be a nuclear war, Mum?" he asked as she tucked him up in bed one night. "I knew that if I didn't reassure him he would toss and turn all night — and maybe for many nights after that. I had no choice, but I was very angry."

Of course we all kid ourselves about nuclear war. Human beings are pastmasters at putting aside such unpleasant possibilities. "Don't dwell on it," "Put it to the back of your mind," "It may never happen" — the well-worn clichés provide an immediate answer to any nagging doubts.

Deirdre decided to take the matter further and find a few answers for herself.

In fact she has spent the past six years and been through what her husband refers to as a "mammoth feat of endurance" to obtain the opinions of more than a hundred people whose views she felt were relevant to the whole nuclear issue.

The inquisitive pen of the concerned Welsh mother spared no one from the Ministry of Defence to the Pentagon, from Indira Gandhi to Doctor Spock.

Deirdre claims she has no

political axe to grind. "Though if anything I suppose I'd vote for the Green Party. What good does it do pontificating on about the economy when the ecology of the world is falling around your ears?"

But the answers to her letters have convinced her that "something, somehow, must be done to stop adults adopting the ostrich attitude to the whole issue of nuclear war. Our leaders are only human beings, they are tremendously vulnerable and it is terrifying to think that the power they wield could destroy the whole world. "If people don't

come to terms with the threat, don't actively do something to prevent a nuclear catastrophe, our children cannot feel safe."

Her main concern is about the blinkered attitudes that people have to the subject.

"The so-called experts in the nuclear industry have been known to lie about the facts — no-one for instance knows of a safe level of radiation, it depends on individual immune systems. After Chernobyl I felt I had learned enough to feel safer cancelling my milk and my family simply stayed indoors that first weekend. Now parents are

One woman's extraordinary correspondence with v

A mother's lie that launched a nuclear quest for the truth

JEAN DONALD meets Deirdre Rhys-Thomas, courageous letter



IN June 1984, Lynn Redgrave in replying to a letter from Deirdre Rhys-Thomas, returned the letter with one word scrawled over it:

EMIGRATE

worried because their children were playing out in the rain.

"It's so ridiculous. We care for our children's teeth, we see they get enough sleep, we watch over their food, but when it comes to a life or death situation like this we can only hope it will be all right."

Recent visits to the Commons

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