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**REBELLING BY ANY MEANS POSSIBLE:  
NEW ZEALAND LOCAL GOVERNMENT NUCLEAR  
WEAPON FREE ZONES**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in History at Massey University

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I would also like to thank Edwina and the team at Peace Movement Aotearoa for consenting to give me access to your records. Thank you also to Ruth Greenaway of the Straw Umbrella Trust who allowed me listen to her recorded peace people interviews.

## ABBREVIATIONS

ANZUS	Australia, New Zealand and United States (Security Alliance)
APF	Anglican Pacifist Fellowship
ATL	Alexander Turnbull Library
CANWAR	Coalition Against Nuclear Warships
CND	Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
Cr	Councillor
FOL	Federation of Labour
HBPP	Home Base Pacific Pilgrimage
IPPNW	International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War
MB	Macmillan Brown Library
MP	Member of Parliament
MPM	Manawatu Peace Movement
NCC	National Council of Churches
NCCD	National Consultative Committee on Disarmament
NCW	National Council of Women
NFIP	Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific
NFZ	Nuclear Free Zone
NOW	National Organisation of Women
NWF	Nuclear Weapon Free
NWFZ	Nuclear Weapon Free Zone
NZNFPFA	New Zealand Nuclear Free Peacemaking Association
NZNFZC	New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee
PACT	Peace Action Tauranga
PMA	Peace Movement Aotearoa
PMNZ	Peace Movement New Zealand
UN	United Nations
UNA	United Nations Association
WILPF	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

**2,090,522 PEOPLE  
OVER 65% OF NEW  
ZEALANDERS LIVE IN  
98 NUCLEAR WEAPON  
FREE ZONES**



### N.W.F.Z. WALL MAP DISPLAY

1. ADD NEW N W F 2 TO YOUR MAP WHEN DECLARED
2. N W F 2 UPDATE WILL BE SENT ON REQUEST
3. INFORMATION ON NUCLEAR AND PEACE ISSUES AND HOW AREAS BECOME N W F 2 S ON REQUEST
4. SEND \$2.00 FOR EXTRA N W F 2 WALL MAP
5. WE RELY ON PUBLIC SUPPORT TO FINANCE THE N W F 2 CAMPAIGN
6. ANY NEW N W F 2 ? SEND INFORMATION TO US NOW
7. NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTION \$10.00 PER YEAR

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# HELP STOP WAR

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\* Over 65% of the New Zealand population covered by local Nuclear Weapon-Free Zones is a world record among nations not yet declared complete Nuclear Weapon-Free Zones.

Population figures based on N.Z. Government Monthly Abstract of Statistics Announcements — December, 1960.



## INTRODUCTION

One hundred and five nuclear weapon free zones (NWFZ) covered the country by 1987. The zones were declared by local Councils and harbour boards, over 72% of New Zealanders lived in these zones. The percentage meant New Zealand could claim the world record for local NWFZs. I had no previous knowledge of these zones until I read an article by Larry Ross on the campaign. The article proclaimed local and national petitions, alongside local body declarations, demonstrated to the Government that the people wanted a Nuclear Free New Zealand.<sup>1</sup> The idea of declaring one's town nuclear free intrigued me, but I was instantly sceptical of the concept. I joined those who had previously scoffed at the notion that a Council could make such a stand against a nuclear armed state and it lead me to ponder what the nuclear free declarations meant. I quickly came to realise that the intention was not usually for the zones to be seen as a literal measure to prevent nuclear weapons from entering people's towns. Rather they were framed as a symbolic gesture and a political move to encourage states into action for nuclear disarmament.

With no means of enforcement, I came to perceive that the process of developing the zones was more important than the final declaration. I believed the growth of zones would have contributed to a sense of legitimacy and momentum, yet I considered that the greater benefits of the NWFZs came from the process. The assumption was that the campaign would educate the public, shape public opinion and help strengthen the peace movement. My key question focused on looking at the processes which led to the local NWFZs being established and to ascertain what they meant in the wider context of the anti- nuclear movement. That process was examined through individual case studies, hoping to draw some conclusions on the importance of local nuclear free declarations.

As the research progressed it became clear that the NWFZs were not the product of a single cohesive campaign. The processes involved in forming the zones were far from universal. The case studies showed that NWFZs did not always follow the pattern that was endorsed by members of the peace movement. The focus of the thesis, therefore, changed to looking at the perceived benefits of the zones and the myths surrounding their usefulness. This lead to an investigation into the discourse surrounding local government NWFZs in New

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<sup>1</sup> Larry Ross, 'Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones total 64', *New Zealand Monthly Review*, November 1983, p. 9.

Zealand and how these myths developed. The case studies are used to examine how these myths matched the actuality of the zones development and implementation.

Even though I was initially sceptical of the usefulness of the zones and latterly have questioned the perceived benefits, I was not sceptical of the ideals of those who proposed them. It must be acknowledged that I have a clear bias in support of the peace workers and the goal of nuclear disarmament. While acknowledging this, it must also be said that I am not an 'insider'; this is not a recollection of any personal involvement. Being born in 1982, this is an account by someone who was not aware of these events at their occurrence. Yet, my interest in matters of peace has allowed me to understand, to an extent, the motivation of people involved, and I would venture to say that people have been more willing to speak with me, knowing me to be a sympathetic audience. At the same time, the fact that I was not involved (even as remote observer) has allowed me to have a distance from the material that others may not have.

This thesis is structured into three parts. The first will focus on the context surrounding the NWFZs. This will examine how the concept of local government nuclear weapon free zones was developed and adopted. The wider formation and work of the peace movement, including the establishment of Peace Movement New Zealand (PMNZ), the umbrella organisation for New Zealand peace groups will be investigated. This section will also examine the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee (NZNFZC), founded by Larry Ross in 1981. It will evaluate the role of that group in promoting the zones and how this key organisation operated.

The second part will explore the pervading myths surrounding the zones. This will examine the arguments surrounding jurisdiction, symbolism and most importantly grassroots rhetoric. While looking at the myths, it will also investigate how the discourse developed through the ideas of Larry Ross, and others, and also how the perceived benefits of the zones have been reinforced through subsequent secondary literature.

The final part of this thesis will be a series of three case studies. The case studies will be used to take a closer look at the NWFZs on a micro level. The case studies will then be measured against the discourse around the zones. The processes involved in Wellington, Palmerston North and Eltham and impact of each of these declarations will be examined. These case studies were not chosen because they were necessarily the most interesting

cases, nor for being representative of how campaigns operated in similar sized Councils. Rather, these three case studies were chosen due to their respective sizes, in order to look at a campaign in a large city; Wellington (which also had the presence of nuclear ship visits) will be examined. Palmerston North was selected as a provincial and university city. While finally Eltham was chosen as a small rural township. The three cases were also selected due to their close proximity to me and the accessibility of resources. The use of case studies is an acknowledgement that the scope of this topic on a national level is much larger than a Masters thesis could accommodate. Time did not allow me to examine all the 105 declarations and so this is admittedly a specific view of the subject.

For this research I have drawn on a variety of sources. Material of peace groups at the Alexander Turnbull Library was particularly useful. The records of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Women's International League of Peace and Freedom and the National Council of Churches indicated a knowledge and promotion of the campaign. The Votes for Peace collection also revealed the proliferation of peace groups and described their lobbying activities and the connection between the local zone campaigns and the efforts made for a New Zealand wide nuclear free zone. Michael Pringle's papers were also particularly helpful and contained a wide range of newspaper clippings on the local NWFZ campaign. The records of Peace Movement Aotearoa (formerly Peace Movement New Zealand) revealed the development of this umbrella organisation as well as detailed reports on local group activity. This collection also contained correspondence which demonstrated some of the early teething problems of the organisation. The Alexander Turnbull Library also held the periodicals of various peace organisations. Most useful was the collection of newsletters from the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee. The Peace Movement New Zealand Newsletter (later to become *Peacelink*) also tracked the growth of zones and reported on activities of groups throughout the country. The Macmillan Brown Library at Canterbury University held a fraction of the records of the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee; this contained its newsletters and publications.

Considerable information for the case studies came from local archives. I consulted the archives of the three Councils of my case studies. Both Palmerston North and Wellington archives held correspondence, minutes of Council meetings and occasional newspaper clippings. The South Taranaki District Council records revealed much less, with no correspondence but there were references to the declaration and the peace movement in the

minutes of meetings. The archives of the Taranaki Museum, Puke Ariki, held no relevant collections on the nuclear free campaign in Taranaki, but did hold copies of the local newspaper, the *Stratford Press*, which contained articles and public notices about Eltham peace activities. Similarly, the archives of Massey University revealed little about the concerns of students or staff on the issue of nuclear disarmament in Palmerston North. Rather I relied on the use of copies of the student paper, *Chaff*, which included articles from Massey Peace Groups. Newspapers were key sources of information in the Wellington and Palmerston North case studies where I used the *Dominion*, the *Evening Post* and the *Evening Standard*, all of which contained articles on the local zones and peace movement activity. They also contained vital letters to the editor, these were the primary source for garnering public reaction to the development of NWFZs.

Further material came from private collections. Larry Ross, the founder of the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee, graciously allowed me to look through some of his papers. However, the volume of material meant that I was not able to look through it all. His material included numerous press clippings, alongside resources that the NZNFZC produced. Ross also generously gave me examples of merchandise that was sold, including stickers, badges, maps and posters. Kate Dewes of the Disarmament and Security Centre (the Christchurch branch of New Zealand Peace Foundation) also kindly opened her files to me. The files contained invaluable material on the formation of Peace Movement New Zealand, the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee and of the zone campaigns of Councils in the Canterbury region. Her collection also contained information on the Home Base Pacific Pilgrimage (HBPP) and a vast array of newspaper clippings on the peace movement and anti-nuclear campaign. Her photos were also a useful source. Roger Peters allowed me to use his personal collection on the Eltham peace movement which held press clippings and correspondence. Similarly, Dr John Campbell-MacDonald allowed me to trawl through his papers which contained minutes and newsletters of the Manawatu Peace Movement, information on his activities in International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), and his speech notes and presentations he made.

Many individuals also allowed me to interview them. They included people involved in the campaigns of the three case studies, alongside those involved in the national movement.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For the complete list of interviews please refer to the bibliography.



These interviews were supplemented by interviews done for the Peace Oral History Project of Otago / Christchurch, a project initiated by the Christchurch branch of the New Zealand Peace Foundation in conjunction with the Straw Umbrella Trust. The interviewer, Ruth Greenaway, allowed me to use this collection, which included interviews of Reverend George Armstrong and Larry Ross. Using oral history, as with other sources has its challenges. Interviews were about events over twenty years ago and frequently details were forgotten and chronology altered. However, by using other sources to confirm details, I was able to overcome most of these difficulties. I also benefited from corresponding with individuals, notably Reverend George Armstrong, Kate Dewes, Larry Ross and Maire Leadbetter who graciously answered my questions and advised me on further sources. The scope of sources was one difficulty I had to confront. There was no shortage of material for this research, particularly potential people to interview. Interviews would frequently reveal lists of a dozen people I could get in touch with for supplementary information, many of whom I did not interview simply due to the sheer numbers involved. Conversely, there were some key people, such as former Eltham Mayor Margaret Smith, who declined to participate. Like all research this is not the complete story, but rather an account from the sources available to me.

While there is a list of abbreviations at the beginning of this thesis, I would also like to make a note on the use of terminology. I will be abbreviating Nuclear Weapon Free Zones to NWFZs, however, in quotations they may be referred to as NFZs. Nuclear Weapon Free Zones and Nuclear Free Zones appear to be used interchangeably throughout sources. Despite slightly different connotations attached to each term. The inclusion of the word 'Weapon' was occasionally used to distinguish between the use of nuclear medicine which was not rejected by proponents of zones. The use of the term 'Weapon' was also used to indicate the exclusion of mining for nuclear materials such as uranium. This was not a concern in New Zealand, but did raise distinctions in the Australian local government zones context. The problem of nuclear powered ships fitting into the term NWFZs was not seen as problematic as all visiting ships were seen to be in violation of such a zone due to the prevailing neither confirm nor deny policy. Despite the differences outlined, the two terms were usually seen to represent the same concept, so unless otherwise stated, NWFZs and NFZs should be seen as synonymous in this thesis. Similarly, I will use the terms peace movement and anti-nuclear movement interchangeably. Distinctions can be made between the two, but in this instance I will use them both. The number of groups under this umbrella was vast and their views diverse. However, all so called peace groups were anti-nuclear and all those that were involved in anti-nuclear



activities can fit into the broad definition of the peace movement, which included everything from strict pacifist organisations to those in opposition to particular forms of militarism. While both these terms will be used, a distinction will be made between peace movement and Peace Movement. The latter may be used as the shortened form of a particular organisation, Peace Movement New Zealand.

## CHAPTER ONE

### DEVELOPMENT OF THE ANTI – NUCLEAR CAMPAIGN

The local body campaigns were the product of preceding anti-nuclear efforts. New Zealand has a long history of activism and opposition to nuclear weapons which emerged shortly after the dropping of the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. The earliest actions began in 1947 when the Peace Union and the Christian Pacifist Society were involved in organising Hiroshima Day commemorations in main centres.<sup>3</sup> While Hiroshima Day remained a focus, it was not until 1956 that there was new impetus for the anti-nuclear cause. In that year a group of Quakers began a petition which gained 83 names, including prominent academics and churchmen.<sup>4</sup> The National Government reaction focused on an earlier External Affairs report which addressed many of the petition's concerns and reinforced the Government's commitment to using the United Nations to voice its concern.<sup>5</sup> This limited petition was followed up by a more comprehensive campaign which took a petition door to door in Auckland during 1957. The petition, which asked the New Zealand Government to make its opposition to nuclear proliferation clear and for a halt in nuclear testing, gained support from other organisations such as the National Council of Women (NCW), the Federation of Labour (FOL) and the National Council of Churches (NCC). The petition, and a similar one from veteran activist of the No More War Movement, Norman Bell, led to the Government making a statement on its nuclear policy.<sup>6</sup> Once again the Government responded by affirming New Zealand's participation in ongoing negotiations for world disarmament and reinforced its desire for peace. However, the Government refused to endorse the call for an end to nuclear testing as it would be an affront to New Zealand's key allies: the United Kingdom and the United States.<sup>7</sup> 1957 saw further nuclear tests by an ally, this time the British in the Christmas Islands. This testing in the Pacific led to opposition from the New Zealand peace movement, but none from the National Government.<sup>8</sup> The Labour Party developed a policy opposing nuclear testing prior to

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<sup>3</sup> Kevin Clements, *Back From the Brink: The Creation of a Nuclear-Free New Zealand*, Wellington: Allen & Unwin, 1988, p. 98.

<sup>4</sup> Elsie Locke, *Peace People: A History of Peace Activities in New Zealand*, Christchurch: Hazard Press, 1992, p. 160.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Hayman, *NZPD* (310), 26th September 1956, p. 2038.

<sup>6</sup> Locke, pp. 160 -1.

<sup>7</sup> Keith Holyoake, *NZPD* (314), 9th October 1957, p. 2925.

<sup>8</sup> Locke, pp. 161 -2.

being elected in late 1957.<sup>9</sup> While anti-nuclear activity did not lead to the new Government adopting the entire positions of the petitions, discussions in parliamentary debates did show that the peace movement's calls for disarmament were at an early stage reaching the highest echelons of power in the country.<sup>10</sup>

While there were increasingly frequent protest actions, it was not until the formation of the New Zealand branch of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) in 1960 that there was an organisation with a sole focus on the nuclear issue.<sup>11</sup> The CND policy was outlined in six steps, by urging the Government: not to acquire or use nuclear weapons; to not be defended by nuclear weapons; to remove itself from alliances that could lead to New Zealand's involvement in nuclear war; for the Government to promote co-operation and disarmament; that the New Zealand work towards the cessation of nuclear testing; and that New Zealand support the formation of a Southern Hemisphere NWFZ.<sup>12</sup> The New Zealand CND also vowed to work with the English CND movement which was established in 1958.<sup>13</sup> New Zealand replicated the CND Easter marches made famous at Aldermaston. The largest of which was held in 1963, the closeness to the recent Cuban Missile Crisis was believed to have raised the numbers to over 600 participants.<sup>14</sup>

The 1963 march also helped promote one of the greater successes of the CND, a petition to get New Zealand to support a Southern Hemisphere Nuclear Free Zone. The petition gained 80,238 signatures, making it at that time the largest petition since that for women's franchise.<sup>15</sup> Following this achievement the CND would face some decline. The Southern Hemisphere Nuclear Free Zone petition led to debate but no resolution. The 1963 Partial Test Ban Treaty had limited media coverage and the protest note made by the National Government regarding the French tests in 1963 also proved to be ineffective.<sup>16</sup> The CND also suffered a further blow in 1965 when the prominent CND secretary Mary Woodward resigned in order to

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<sup>9</sup> Nigel Roberts, *New Zealand and Nuclear Testing in the Pacific*, Wellington: New Zealand Institute of International Affairs, 1972, p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> *NZPD* (310), 1956, pp. 2038 –2048; *NZPD* (314), 1957, pp. 2916 – 2925.

<sup>11</sup> Locke, p. 164.

<sup>12</sup> Mary Woodward, *The Bomb: A New Zealand View*, Christchurch: New Zealand CND, 1963.

<sup>13</sup> John Minnion and Philip Bolsover (eds), *The CND Story: The first 25 years of CND in the words of people involved*, London: Allison & Busby, 1983, p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> Maire Leadbetter, 'New Zealand and the 'Bomb' – a peace movement perspective', Text supplied by Leadbetter, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Locke, p. 180

<sup>16</sup> Roberts, p. 17.

move to Australia.<sup>17</sup> More importantly the Vietnam War protests soon overshadowed any anti-nuclear activity. The various anti-bases campaigns also contributed to a diffusion of energy. The Omega base, a US Navy navigational system, which was proposed for development in the Southern Alps, was eventually scrapped following protests in 1968.<sup>18</sup> Further protests continued against other bases, such as Woodbourne, which was seen to be part of the international infrastructure that could be used in nuclear attacks and could subsequently make New Zealand a target.<sup>19</sup>

The anti-nuclear cause was reinvigorated with renewed attention on French nuclear tests in the early 1970s. While the National Government continued to limit its opposition to diplomatic messages to the French Government, the peace movement were looking at new forms of opposition.<sup>20</sup> Continued nuclear testing at Mururoa in 1972 saw a new wave of protest in the form of protest flotillas to Mururoa. The testing also led to protest marches and a petition promoted through Radio Hauraki. This petition gained 81,475 signatures.<sup>21</sup> Elsie Locke suggests that this support reaffirmed Labour's nuclear free policy.<sup>22</sup> The Labour Government put its nuclear testing policy into practice after being elected in 1972. Its actions included a case to the International Court of Justice and in 1973 it sent a frigate to protest further French testing.<sup>23</sup> Bill Rowling, who became Prime Minister after Norman Kirk's death, reinforced Kirk's earlier opposition by stating that the Labour Party not only opposed nuclear testing but also nuclear ship visits. The policy came under pressure from the United States and it appeared that the Government was wavering on its stance when Rowling deferred the issue until after the 1975 election.<sup>24</sup> It did not have the chance to readdress the issue as the National Party was elected. The new Government re-introduced nuclear ship visits under the assertion that it was fulfilling its commitments to ANZUS.<sup>25</sup> These nuclear ship visits lead to what could be described as the most powerful display of opposition to nuclear weapons seen in this country. It was conducted under the umbrella name of the Peace Squadron.

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<sup>17</sup> Locke, p. 185 -6.

<sup>18</sup> Leadbetter, p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> Locke, p. 269.

<sup>20</sup> Roberts, p. 17.

<sup>21</sup> Locke, pp. 288, 292-3.

<sup>22</sup> Locke, p. 293.

<sup>23</sup> Alyn Ware and Kate Dewes, 'Nuclear Weapon Free Zones: From Symbolic Gesture to Statutory Ban: The Aotearoa – New Zealand Experience', A paper for the Seminar on Nuclear Weapon Free Zones: Crucial steps towards a Nuclear-Free World; Uppsala, September 2000, <http://www.lcnp.org/disarmament/nwzf/NewZealandExperience.htm>.

<sup>24</sup> Clements, pp. 84 -5.

<sup>25</sup> Clements, p. 85.

The Peace Squadron originated when Reverend George Armstrong and others from St Johns Anglican Theological College sent a telegram to Rowling in 1975 requesting that the Government not allow nuclear ships to enter New Zealand ports.<sup>26</sup> Armstrong believed that protest actions were a form of public worship and became involved in various action groups that were concerned with peace and racism.<sup>27</sup> When National reintroduced the nuclear ship visits, he sought to demonstrate opposition through a waterborne protest. The idea was inspired by a protest of Quakers in Philadelphia he witnessed in 1971. The Quakers had sought to create a blockade of a shipment of arms to Pakistan; they did so by lining up in kayaks and canoes.<sup>28</sup> In New Zealand this translated into Aucklanders taking to the water in yachts, dinghies and surfboards to symbolically barricade the wharf and express their rejection of the presence of nuclear ships in New Zealand ports. The dramatic images of small boats in the path of warships and a protestor standing atop a submarine would draw attention to a new era of anti-nuclear protest.

While the Peace Squadron would still remain a powerful action group in the various parts of the country where it had developed, the spokesperson of the organisation soon saw a need for further organisation. Armstrong approached the protesting sailors with the proposition that they become more organised. This proposition was rejected. Armstrong said later that the sailors preferred to spend their time on the water and that the organisation had to come from elsewhere.<sup>29</sup> The organisational gap was filled by groups such as the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific (NFIP) organisation, which embraced a wider indigenous rights agenda, and the formation of Peace Movement New Zealand in 1982. A key component of movement building, according to Armstrong, was the nuclear free zone idea.<sup>30</sup>

The idea of personal nuclear free zone declarations was introduced to New Zealanders by Armstrong and the operation of what became known as the Home Base Pacific Pilgrimage (HBPP). The concept was that one would make a personal nuclear free zone declaration as a part of a wider campaign called the Home Base Pacific Pilgrimage, which publicised its

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<sup>26</sup> Tom Newnham, *Peace Squadron: The Sharp End of Nuclear Protest in New Zealand*, Auckland: Graphic Publications, 1986, p. 8.

<sup>27</sup> George Armstrong, Interview with Ruth Greenaway, 21<sup>st</sup> July 2003. Peace Oral History Project of Otautahi / Christchurch.

<sup>28</sup> Newnham, p. 6.

<sup>29</sup> George Armstrong, Interview with Ruth Greenaway, 21<sup>st</sup> July 2003.

<sup>30</sup> George Armstrong, Interview with Ruth Greenaway, 21<sup>st</sup> July 2003.

campaign through a newspaper called *Freezonenews*. These declarations, like later local Government ones, were symbolic measures to empower people and make a political statement. Armstrong recalls the idea developed out of 'communal interaction and inspiration'.<sup>31</sup> He attributed Andrew Beyer (a fellow Anglican Minister), Margaret Barnaby, Celine Kearney, Elaine Shaw and Kate Dewes with assisting in the development of the campaign in 1980.<sup>32</sup> Yet, personal nuclear free declarations were still the acknowledged 'brain child' of Armstrong.<sup>33</sup> This differs from the account by Kevin Clements who attributed declarations of homes and buildings to groups of women, particularly from Auckland, rather than to Home Base.<sup>34</sup> The omission of the HBPP was accepted by Lawrence Wittner who cited Clements and said that the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee borrowed the idea of declarations from activist women declaring their homes to be nuclear free.<sup>35</sup> Rather than being a spontaneous action, the declarations came from an organised campaign. The idea of personal statements was similar to the actions of some French Polynesians who declared themselves to be a part of a Nuclear Free Zone in defiance of their colonial Governors in 1975.<sup>36</sup>

The Pacific Pilgrimage component of HBPP bears remarkable similarities to earlier Peace Squadron activities. It entailed sending boats through the Pacific in 1982 educating Pacific people as the crew headed towards Bangor where the US were building Trident Submarines. Upon reaching Bangor they would protest the building of these submarines.<sup>37</sup> The HBPP took hold of the Christian concept of a pilgrimage, not only in terms of a journey, but in terms of expecting a miracle. The miracle they sought was a disarming of the Trident Submarines, the dream being that the pilgrims would offer to assist the US military in a dismantling effort. There was of course recognition that this idea was rather far fetched, however, *Freezonenews* stated that HBPP hoped the news of their campaign would give hope to the Pacific and gain media attention. One of the goals being: 'To express to the world that

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<sup>31</sup> George Armstrong, Correspondence with author, 4<sup>th</sup> October 2004.

<sup>32</sup> George Armstrong, Correspondence with author, 4<sup>th</sup> October 2004.

<sup>33</sup> Maire Leadbetter, Correspondence with author, 14<sup>th</sup> November 2004.

<sup>34</sup> Clements, p. 115.

<sup>35</sup> Lawrence S. Wittner, *The Struggle Against the Bomb, Volume 3, Toward Nuclear Abolition: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement, 1971 to the Present*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003, p. 209.

<sup>36</sup> Owen Wilkes, 'For Nuclear Peace in the Pacific', *New Zealand Monthly Review*, Volume XVI, No. 170, September 1975, p. 3.

<sup>37</sup> Kate Dewes, Interview with author, 7<sup>th</sup> May 2004.



here in New Zealand we may be crazy enough to expect miracles but we are not so crazy as to tolerate the presence and further proliferation of nuclear weapons in our world.’<sup>38</sup>

The Home Base component of the campaign was seen as one way of providing assistance to the Pacific Pilgrimage and also as a means to provide a form of nuclear free base from which the voyage would be launched.<sup>39</sup> Just as the Pacific Pilgrimage had idealistic goals – so did the Home Base campaign. The idea was for individuals to make a personal stand and declare a nuclear free zone. The declarations were to be free and willing, where people were not to be compelled to take part and were limited to places that people used, controlled or owned – not declarations to be imposed by outsiders.<sup>40</sup> The zones were not limited to personal space, but also over homes and offices. While personal declarations of homes, pets and cars was seen as the beginning, it was conceived even in the earliest of stages that nuclear weapon free zones would spread to institutions, streets and public buildings. In fact the organisers saw no limit on what could be declared. ‘Anything that moves or stays still, anything that lives or doesn’t can be declared “nuclear weapon free”.’<sup>41</sup>

The organisers stated that the emphasis of the project was that of life over death - a statement against the possible future of extinction. The campaign was also marked by a noticeable Pacific focus, which can be attributed to the growing indigenous rights movements which frequently overlapped with the anti nuclear movement in groups like NFIP. Apart from the Pacific Pilgrimage, there were clear signs that the campaign was attempting to be multicultural. There was a focus on the role of the Pacific indigenous people and publications were written in several languages.<sup>42</sup> Both of these notions, life and the Pacific, can be seen in the process of making a nuclear free declaration. Stickers were displayed as a part of the declaration process. The logo used was a circle with a red background with a Maori stylised CND peace symbol in white and black. It was a uniquely New Zealand symbol for the campaign. The plan was that a sticker would be placed on a person’s gate or car or similarly, people could wear a badge to signify their own nuclear free stand.

<sup>38</sup> *Freezonenews*, November / December 1980, p. 1.

<sup>39</sup> Te Ohu Rongomau o Aotearoa/ The New Zealand Peace Workshop 1981 Report, Kate Dewes Personal Collection, p. 6.

<sup>40</sup> Home Base, Pacific Pilgrimage – Elements of the twin projects (1980), Kate Dewes Personal Collection.

<sup>41</sup> Home Base, Pacific Pilgrimage – Elements of the twin projects (1980), Kate Dewes Personal Collection.

<sup>42</sup> For a Nuclear Free Pacific / Home Base Pacific Pilgrimage Pamphlet, St Andrew’s Peace Group Records, 91-119-3, Alexander Turnbull Library (ATL).

Another component of the HBPP campaign was the suggestion that people should hold a declaration ceremony. This would be an occasion where friends and neighbours would be encouraged to attend in the hope that others would follow suit.<sup>43</sup> The declaration day encouraged people to mark the event with poems or dance. A key part of the process was a written declaration which one could read aloud.<sup>44</sup> Following the declaration, participants were asked to register their nuclear weapon free zones. One service office was set up in Auckland, while representatives of regions were later designated at the 1981 Peace Workshop.<sup>45</sup> It was intended that the register of NWFZs could be later used as a political tool.<sup>46</sup>

The goal of spreading personal nuclear free zones throughout New Zealand was envisaged as an important first step to wider nuclear free zones.<sup>47</sup> It was also a method for getting people to consider the nuclear issue. George Armstrong stated that in getting your school or church to be nuclear free one would need to gain permission from a governing body; doing so would lead to a 'process of education and political action and strategic formulation for that.'<sup>48</sup> It appears that people were sceptical and critical of the symbolic nature of declarations and Home Base sought to address its doubters in June 1982. They talked about a declaration in political rather than symbolic terms. HBPP acknowledged that nuclear free countries relied on Governments but held onto the view that the individual could change the position of the Government.<sup>49</sup>

The declaration is political – and becomes more effective politically – each time another person or group makes it. People change governments, or at least government policies. In this country it is an achievable goal to set shape the policy of a major political party towards a NWF zone in New Zealand and the Pacific region.<sup>50</sup>

Armstrong has since said he rarely heard criticism about the symbolic nature of the zones and that symbolism was not a distinction he drew.

The keenest NFZ people were direction action people for whom symbol and reality were not two things but one thing. As Paul Tillich says, a symbol "participates in the

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<sup>43</sup> Home Base, *Pacific Pilgrimage – Elements of the twin projects* (1980), Kate Dewes Personal Collection.

<sup>44</sup> See Appendix A.

<sup>45</sup> This Peace Workshop will be discussed further later in this chapter.

<sup>46</sup> Home Base, *Pacific Pilgrimage – Elements of the twin projects* (1980), Kate Dewes Personal Collection.

<sup>47</sup> For a Nuclear Free Pacific/ Home Base Pacific Pilgrimage Pamphlet, St Andrew's Peace Group Records, 91-119-3, ATL.

<sup>48</sup> George Armstrong, Interview with Ruth Greenaway, 21<sup>st</sup> July 2003.

<sup>49</sup> *Freezonenews*, June 1982, p. 2.

<sup>50</sup> *Freezonenews*, June 1982, p. 2.



reality that it represents". The fact that the zone movement led directly to tough government anti-nuclear legislation shows how real a symbol can be. It certainly was real to the US military and Government who tried all the bullying tactics in the world to stop the NZ Government of the day from implementing the legislation.<sup>51</sup>

Yet, Armstrong tackled not only the symbolic issue but also reaffirms his view in the effectiveness of the personal declarations as components of a broader political movement.

A timetable was set by HBPP for a Declaration Day to be held on November 11<sup>th</sup> 1980, Armistice Day. This was when people throughout the country would make declarations and inform the register.<sup>52</sup> The official launch of the project was at the New Zealand Peace Groups Conference in August 1980, where representatives of peace groups gathered to discuss goals and further co-operation. An attendee at the 1980 Conference who reported back to Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) remarked that the idea of personal NWFZs was greeted with humour.<sup>53</sup> Yet the idea was picked up by the groups and WILPF, CND and the United Nations Association (UNA) advised their members take part in Home Base declarations. The Auckland CND was also a place where one could purchase the stickers. The campaign was subsequently endorsed at the next Peace Workshop held in Christchurch in 1981.<sup>54</sup>

There is no figure for exactly how many people embraced the Home Base declarations and followed the associated rituals. The only indicator the campaign had exceeded expectations was in the group's paper, *Freezonenews*; it revealed that for a time it ran out of the stickers.<sup>55</sup> The paper also conveyed examples of declarations that had been made. The groups aimed to have churches, maraes, offices and clubs declared nuclear free. Of these it appears that mainly churches seemed to adopt the idea. The Cathedral in Christchurch was an early declaration, which several parishes in Auckland followed. All of the offices of the National Council of Churches became NWFZs, as did the Auckland Methodist Mission.<sup>56</sup> Not surprisingly the base of Armstrong and Beyer, St Johns Theological College, was also a zone. The Knox College and Theological Halls declaration in Dunedin received a negative response.

<sup>51</sup> George Armstrong, Correspondence with author, 4<sup>th</sup> October 2004.

<sup>52</sup> Home Base, Pacific Pilgrimage – Elements of the twin projects (1980), Kate Dewes Personal Collection.

<sup>53</sup> WILPF NZ Section Newsletter, no. 3, September 1980, Brodie, Audrey, fl 1980s, Records relating to the Women's International League of Peace and Freedom and the National Council of Women, 89-094-2, ATL.

<sup>54</sup> Te Ohu Rongomau o Aotearoa/ The New Zealand Peace Workshop 1981 Report, Kate Dewes Personal Collection, p. 3.

<sup>55</sup> *Freezonenews*, September 1981, p. 2

<sup>56</sup> *Freezonenews*, September 1981, p. 2

The members of the college produced a sign to advertise their declaration which was stolen within twenty four hours.<sup>57</sup>

Other personal declarations were advertised beyond the peace movement publications. A couple in Christchurch decided to place an advertisement in the Public Notices of the *Christchurch Star* giving details of the size of their home and location and that they had declared their property a nuclear free zone. The example was used by the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee in later years. It was promoted as a fantastic idea and it was stressed that the declaration had come from a Grandmother who was not affiliated to any peace group.<sup>58</sup> At a Home Base workshop in Auckland, where people were invited to share their experiences, it was hoped that the zones would gain further media coverage.<sup>59</sup> Eventually the personal declarations became over shadowed by those of City and Borough Councils and national nuclear weapon free zone campaigns. However, the image below from 1984 shows how personal declarations remained a part of the momentum building prior to approaching a Council for a nuclear free zone.<sup>60</sup>



Kate Dewes marking NWFZs in Fendalton, Canterbury. Photo courtesy of Kate Dewes.

<sup>57</sup> Peace Movement New Zealand Newsletter, No. 4, November 1982, p. 8.

<sup>58</sup> *Christchurch Star*, December 19<sup>th</sup> 1981, in New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Pamphlet, nd, Larry Ross Personal Collection.

<sup>59</sup> Home Base Pacific Pilgrimage Newsletter, nd, Kate Dewes Personal Collection.

<sup>60</sup> Kate Dewes, Interview with author, 7<sup>th</sup> May 2004.

The idea of having nuclear free towns was an international concept. The local Government NWFZ declarations were a part of a worldwide campaign in the late 1970s and 1980s. With there now being over 4000 local authority NWFZs in 2005. The first city based zone was Handa City in Japan which declared a 'non nuclear armament zone' in 1958.<sup>61</sup> Other Japanese cities followed suit, yet it was the declarations in the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada that had more influence on New Zealand through peace movement networks. The Australian Nuclear Free Zone Movement began in 1975 and the first New Zealand declaration used the Australian zones as part of their own justification.<sup>62</sup> Others would use material from Vancouver in their proposals.<sup>63</sup> The New Zealand peace movement was not an isolated entity; it was influenced by the actions and activities of those abroad. This research focuses on the Council campaign in New Zealand communities, yet it is important to acknowledge that groups were informed of the wider international Council campaign. New Zealand sent representatives to the first International Local Authority NFZ Conference held in Manchester in 1984, where 200 local representatives came from NWFZs from around the world.<sup>64</sup> The New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee also updated the number of international zones in its publications and made a lot of the fact that New Zealand eventually held the world record for the country with the highest percentage of its population living in NWFZs. It is clear from overseas publications that New Zealanders were keeping those overseas aware of the progress.<sup>65</sup>

The first reference to a local Government NWFZ in New Zealand came in the November / December 1980 issue of the *Freezonenews*. HBPP did not see it as a separate campaign, but part of the general NWFZ declarations. It requested people get their 'local church committee, sports club, marae, service club, local body government to declare all its property and facilities.'<sup>66</sup> It does not make it clear if the request was to get Councils to make NFZ declarations of the Council chambers and parks it owned or if it was for a wider blanket

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<sup>61</sup> Kate Dewes, *The World Court Project: The Evolution and Impact of an Effective Citizens' Movement*, PhD Thesis, University of New England, 1998, p. 75.

<sup>62</sup> Letter to Town Clerk of Devonport Borough from Town Clerk of City of Collingwood, 27<sup>th</sup> April 1981, Newnham, Thomas Oliver, 1926 -: Papers relating to anti-apartheid movements, MS-Group-0320, 96-004-1, ATL.

<sup>63</sup> The City of Vancouver Declares Itself a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone, Wellington City Archives, Town Clerk's File 00001: 2140: 60/4915 part 1.

<sup>64</sup> 'Local Body Nuclear Weapon Free Zone Reps Meet at First International Conference', *N.Z. Nuclear Free Zone Committee Newsletter*, August – September 1984, p. 8.

<sup>65</sup> Excerpt from *New Abolitionist*, in, *N.Z. Nuclear Free Zone Committee Newsletter*, April – May 1984, p. 7.

<sup>66</sup> *Freezonenews*, November / December 1980, p. 1.

city/ town zone. Regardless, it made explicit that the local Councils should be targeted to make clear political statements on nuclear free zones.

The Borough of Devonport was the first Council in the country to be declared a NWFZ. The Devonport declaration is an important one as it highlights the kinds of debates which were frequently repeated around the country. It also is important to note that this Council declaration was organic, it had no national organizing body directing the process. The case challenges the centrality of the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee in the Council declaration campaigns. The move to have Devonport declared a nuclear free zone began in 1980 prior to the Committee's formation. In September 1980 a meeting was held in connection with the Navy's proposal for a wharf in Devonport. From that meeting the Devonport branch of the National Organisation of Women (NOW) began to approach the local Borough Council. A letter was sent to the Town Clerk in 1981 by Thomasina Gunn of NOW requesting that the Council declare the area a nuclear free zone.<sup>67</sup> To signify support, residents sent in coupons created by NOW expressing their view in favour of a NWFZ, Gunn believed the call of a zone represented the wishes of the majority of the Borough residents. The people of Devonport did not rush to show their support. At the time of the Town Clerk report on the zone, the Council had received 43 coupons and 25 letters of support. The Town Clerk also reported back that there was no precedent in New Zealand, but that Australian local Governments had made similar declarations.<sup>68</sup> The Council meeting on March 17<sup>th</sup> 1981 considered the report and concluded that bylaws could ensure that the Borough is free of nuclear reactors but that it had no control over ship visits. Despite this practical limitation the Council decided that the borough should be considered a Nuclear Free Area and signs were posted on the boundaries to express this. The decision was not reached without opposition. Cr Maingay believed the declaration only represented 1% of the population and that it was a token gesture. He suggested a connection between that year's election and the Labour policy. Labour leader Rowling had previously expressed support for a proposed NFZ in Devonport. The objections were not enough to prevent the decision being narrowly passed.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Letter to Town Clerk of Borough of Devonport from Thomasina Gunn, 13<sup>th</sup> February 1981, Newnham, Thomas Oliver, 1926 -: Papers relating to anti-apartheid movements, MS-Group-0320, ATL, 96-004-1.

<sup>68</sup> Nuclear Free Zones Report, Newnham, Thomas Oliver, 1926 -: Papers relating to anti-apartheid and peace movements, MS-Group-0320, 96-004-1, ATL.

<sup>69</sup> 'Devonport is now nuclear-free', *North Shore Times Age*, 24<sup>th</sup> March 1981, Michael James Pringle, 1962 -, Papers relating to Peace Movements and Nuclear Issues, 94-159, ATL.

The Devonport action and the continued work of the Home Base Pacific Pilgrimage was only part of a broad increase in peace activity. With this increased activity, it became a priority to have some form of co-ordination and moves were made for a meeting of peace groups.<sup>70</sup> The 1980 peace group meeting in Wellington, where the HBPP campaign was launched, also laid the groundwork for a further meeting in 1981. The October 1981 conference was set to be a crucial one in the development of the movement nationally. The meeting was held at Living Springs in Christchurch from the 23<sup>rd</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> of October. Throughout the weekend, participants split off into groups to discuss the relationship of the peace movement with the issues of racism and sexism, party politics, trade unions and the Church.<sup>71</sup> Another area for discussion was the form and organisation of the peace movement. The summary report noted that 'It was felt important that within itself the movement should operate as a non-hierarchical, non-sexist, non-racist structure and to the outside world we must present a united front in the cause of peace. From most of the groups came the common theme of the need for some form of coordination or structure or unification.'<sup>72</sup> The workshop decided on a Peace 'Wotnot'. This would become Peace Movement New Zealand (PMNZ) following further meetings around the country.<sup>73</sup> At a meeting in Lower Hutt in February 1982, it was decided that the PMNZ would be formed as a co-ordinating group. It was to be run on consensus principles and would be funded through pledges. It was also decided that the national office would operate from Dunedin, initially run by volunteers.<sup>74</sup>

The 1981 Peace workshop was also a time of idea sharing and resolutions were passed supporting various groups' activities. A report on the weekend from a WILPF member stated that the weekend was notable for its lack of conflict.<sup>75</sup> However, conflict between Larry Ross and PMNZ followed the organisations formation.<sup>76</sup> Ross was joined by George Armstrong in voicing concern about the wording of the Peace Workshop press release. The statement said that the PMNZ was 'responsible for initiating and co-ordinating the work of a variety of peace groups throughout NZ'. The inclusion of the word initiating led to concerns over the

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<sup>70</sup> Clements, p. 114.

<sup>71</sup> Te Ohu Rongomau o Aotearoa/ The New Zealand Peace Workshop 1981 Report, Kate Dewes Personal Collection.

<sup>72</sup> Te Ohu Rongomau o Aotearoa/ The New Zealand Peace Workshop 1981 Report, Kate Dewes Personal Collection, p. 3.

<sup>73</sup> The group is now known as Peace Movement Aotearoa (PMA)

<sup>74</sup> Peace Movement New Zealand, National Council of Churches in New Zealand: Further Records, 90-387-15/3.

<sup>75</sup> WILPF NZ Section Newsletter, no. 4, November 1981, Brodie, Audrey, fl 1980s, Records relating to the Women's International League of Peace and Freedom and the National Council of Women, 89-094-2, ATL.

<sup>76</sup> Letter to PMNZ Working Group from June Stroud, 17<sup>th</sup> July 1982, Peace Movement Aotearoa Records, 91-124-1, ATL.



autonomy of peace groups.<sup>77</sup> Despite the terminology, PMNZ maintained itself as a co-ordinating body that allowed organisations to pursue their own goals. The decentralised nature of the movement in New Zealand made it different from many international movements.<sup>78</sup> An advantage of the decentralised nature of the peace movement was that it allowed its power base to spread amongst numerous groups. The spread of groups was seen to be advantageous if the United States or others wished to infiltrate and damage the movement. Roderic Alley suggests that it made the movement difficult to define and problematic for political authorities nationally and abroad to gain a sense of its strength.<sup>79</sup> However, an indicator of the movement's strength came in 1983 when there were 300 peace groups operating in New Zealand.<sup>80</sup> Many of these were community groups that took part in the NWFZ campaign, a number of which received advice from the PMNZ and the newly established New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee.

The New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee (NZNFZC) has been portrayed as the central organisation for the development of the local nuclear free zones.<sup>81</sup> While not the originator of the idea, it was a body which encouraged the development of such zones. Therefore, it is important to discuss the Committee's formation and operation and how it contributed to the Local Government Nuclear Weapon Free Zone movement.

The Committee was the brainchild of Larry Ross. Ross was born in the United States in 1927 and moved to live in Canada at the age of eight. He had worked in Canada in engineering and advertising prior to his decision to emigrate to New Zealand in 1962.<sup>82</sup> The move of his wife and six children was made due to the perceived risks of nuclear war. Ross first became interested in the nuclear threat after World War Two. However his decision to leave Canada followed suggestions by Governments that people build fall out shelters as a personal

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<sup>77</sup> Letter to Gabrielle Panckhurst and Tim Jones from George Armstrong, 6<sup>th</sup> October 1982, Peace Movement Aotearoa Records, 91-124-1, ATL.

<sup>78</sup> Dewes, p. 149.

<sup>79</sup> Roderic Alley, 'ANZUS and the Nuclear Issue', in, Jonathan Boston and Martin Holland (eds.), *The Fourth Labour Government: Radical Politics in New Zealand*, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 199.

<sup>80</sup> Kate Dewes and Robert Green, *Aotearoa / New Zealand at the World Court*, Christchurch: Disarmament and Security Centre, 1999, p. 17.

<sup>81</sup> Stuart McMillan, *Neither Confirm Nor Deny: The Nuclear Ships Dispute Between New Zealand & the United States*, New York: Praeger, 1987, p. 31; Paul Landais-Stamp & Paul Rogers, *Rocking the boat: New Zealand, the United States, and the Nuclear-Free Controversy in the 1980s*, Oxford: Berg, 1989; p. 21, John Ulrich, *Journey Towards World Peace: A History of the New Zealand Peace Council*, Wellington: Lake Ohia, 1998, p. 105; Clements, pp. 115 – 116.

<sup>82</sup> Biographical Details of Lawrence F.J. Ross, Kate Dewes Personal Collection.

precaution. Ross rejected this idea, believing that if one was to survive they would then be confronted with a world in chaos. He decided that rather than spend money on building such a shelter, he would use the money to move his family to a safer place, New Zealand. Upon his arrival, he became involved in the Vietnam War protests. He founded the Bertrand Russell Foundation in New Zealand and Australia, and worked at the head of that group becoming engaged in a debate with the Prime Minister through the pages of the *New Zealand Monthly Review*.<sup>83</sup> In the period following the Vietnam War, Ross abandoned his career of freelance writing and his ongoing peace work in order to garner a steady income. Yet, he gained further skills to be used in his future peace work through employment in public opinion and consumer research in the South Island, later being employed at the Western Building Society. During those intervening years he was not heavily involved in the peace movement, however, after the split up of his family in 1979, Ross re-entered as an active part of the movement.<sup>84</sup> In 1981, Ross began asking people to invest in the Western Building Society, which would allow him more time to work for peace.<sup>85</sup> In November of that year he resigned from his job to become a fulltime peace worker.<sup>86</sup>

Ross resigning from his job was a sign of his commitment to the cause of peace. He believed that people should make 'material sacrifices' in order to reduce the threat of nuclear war.<sup>87</sup> The importance of the cause compared to the goal of wealth was a frequent refrain in his writing, particularly noted when the organisation was in need of financial assistance. The urgency of his task as a peace worker continued throughout the 1980s. Ross later recalled how he would look upon the beauty in the world and think about how it could all turn to ashes.<sup>88</sup> The perception of threat was not unique to Ross, and was an underlying message behind the organisation he founded. There were ongoing references to annihilation in what seemed at times like an apocalyptic liturgy. Ross not only propagated such statements, but he also proposed that people could change the situation. This too would become a key component in the local Government campaign. Ross later spoke about his ongoing attitude towards working against the threat of nuclear annihilation.

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<sup>83</sup> Larry Ross, Interview with author, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2004.

<sup>84</sup> Roger Foley, 'Inside the Peace Movement', *New Zealand Times*, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1986, in, MB 396, Box 2, Folder 5, Macmillan Brown Library.

<sup>85</sup> Larry Ross, 'Help Prevent Nuclear War: Promote Peace', Larry Ross Personal Collection.

<sup>86</sup> Larry Ross, 'Report on Committee Activities and Lecture Tour', *New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee Newsletter*, September 1982, p. 2.

<sup>87</sup> Larry Ross, 'N.Z. Nuclear Free Zone Committee Report', *New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee Newsletter*, May/ June 1983, p. 11.

<sup>88</sup> Larry Ross, Interview with Author, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2004.

Sometimes I feel like the people imprisoned in the Nazi death camps must have felt and that is although the prospect is extremely bleak about them being saved, and it is for us, saving ourselves, we haven't got much choice, we're still alive and we've got to do something about this as long as we remain alive. It's an inbuilt survival, whatever you want to call it, an ethical instinct too.<sup>89</sup>

Ross' ethical basis came from his Methodist upbringing. However, he came to reject that particular faith and became a Unitarian, a group that does not believe in the existence of a spiritual super power. Ross explained how this belief was the basis of his peace work. 'We believe that man is the arbiter of his own destiny on this planet and it's up to him whether he makes a heaven or a hell'.<sup>90</sup> This attitude is reflected in his views on people becoming involved in the anti-nuclear movement, for it was up to people to try to prevent a nuclear holocaust, their destiny was in their own hands.

The formation of the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee did not stem from or especially emphasise the potential of local Council NWFZs, as had been seen in Devonport. The focus was on New Zealand as a whole becoming nuclear free. At the October 1981 peace workshop Larry Ross first publicly aired his idea for a new organisation. It was based on a five point plan. Firstly, New Zealand and its territories would be declared Nuclear Weapon Free Zones and secondly, that the Government would adopt the foreign policy approach of positive neutrality. The third point in the plan would see New Zealand increase support for the efforts of the United Nations. Fourthly, it was proposed that the country would withdraw from any military alliances (such as ANZUS) which could involve the country in nuclear war. The final point saw New Zealand acting as a peacemaking nation trying to stop nuclear war if it began, while also going to the aid of any survivors.<sup>91</sup>

The plan was presented to the Peace Workshop and approved.<sup>92</sup> From this vote of confidence, Ross officially launched the Committee at a public lecture on the 7<sup>th</sup> of December 1981. The meeting held in Christchurch attracted 50 people and was reported on in *The Press*.<sup>93</sup> Key members in subsequent years were Barbara and Robert Leonard. Barbara was

<sup>89</sup> Larry Ross, Interview with Author, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2004.

<sup>90</sup> Larry Ross, Interview with Author, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2004.

<sup>91</sup> *New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee Newsletter*, 8<sup>th</sup> March 1982, p. 4.

<sup>92</sup> Te Ohu Rongomau o Aotearoa/ The New Zealand Peace Workshop 1981 Report, Kate Dewes Personal Collection, p. 9.

<sup>93</sup> 'Anti-nuclear move', *Press*, 9<sup>th</sup> December 1981, p. 13.



involved in computers and wrote about the potential threat of a computer error leading to Nuclear War. Her husband Robert wrote articles for the NZNFZC committee. Another key member was John Gallagher who specialised in the positive neutrality policy, which would see New Zealand being an active peacemaking nation. Despite these other individual's participation and the works of other volunteers, it was clear that Ross was the main force behind the organisation. The first meeting also launched a Peacemaker Petition for a nuclear free country.<sup>94</sup>

At the formation of the NZNFZC, the focus was on gaining a nuclear free New Zealand and there was little sign that it would become the main advocate of the Council declarations. New Zealand was the focus, the Committee considering that as a sovereign country, it could make such a declaration. The goal of the group for a nuclear free and neutral New Zealand was criticised at times as being too narrow in comparison to the objectives of other groups in the peace movement.<sup>95</sup> Ross made it clear that the group supported the goals of a Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific, but believed it could be more effective with New Zealand as its objective and making New Zealand the first step.

I've been active in the peace movement for a long time and I've seen groups trying to make progress towards such goals as a Nuclear Free Pacific or total world disarmament, and while I agree that these ideals are worthwhile, I feel that one reason we haven't succeeded in achieving any goals to speak of in the peace movement is because we've always aimed too high. We should aim for goals which are not as spectacular, but would be in themselves significant steps towards world peace.<sup>96</sup>

The focus on steps and attainable goals would become an important part of the NZNFZC's work with council declarations.

The goal of the NZNFZC was to see New Zealand become a nuclear weapon free state. In order for this to occur the group had both an educational and political strategy. The group, Ross believed, was called to help change the minds of New Zealanders, including politicians, through dialogue, fact and reason.<sup>97</sup> He elaborated on the strategy:

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<sup>94</sup> Larry Ross, 'Report on Committee Activities and Lecture Tour', *New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee Newsletter*, September 1982, p. 2.

<sup>95</sup> Larry Ross, 'Global Co-operation or Annihilation', *New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee Newsletter*, August / September 1983, p. 2.

<sup>96</sup> Larry Ross, 'Nuclear Nightmares', *Critic*, nd, Larry Ross Personal Collection.

<sup>97</sup> Larry Ross, 'Statement to Peace Forum on Issues and Strategy for NZNFZ Committee', Kate Dewes Personal Collection.

Fund-raising and education are fundamental to creating a massive grass-roots reaction against the threat of nuclear annihilation and for the creation of an expanding network of local NWF Zones to a national zone and replacement of ANZUS with 'Positive Neutrality' and international peacemaking.<sup>98</sup>

Local NWFZs became a part of this strategy soon after the group's formation which was involved in the Christchurch NWFZ declaration that saw it become the first city in the country to take on that status. The local zones were seen as a way of fulfilling the goals of the group by educating the public. In addition they were useful as a form of public pressure. Quickly local Council declarations became the most notable part of the NZNFZC's wider campaign.

The NZNFZC was involved in a wide range of activities. As its strategy denotes, the group saw fundraising as 'fundamental', it solicited donations along with subscriptions for its newsletter. Yet the NZNFZC stood apart from other organisations through its innovative merchandising. The ad-man in Larry Ross saw the potential of selling merchandise. The list of items sold was extensive, and in some instances the order form appeared to be as long as the group's newsletters, which it accompanied. The NZNFZC sold a range of peace badges, stickers and posters. Many of the items contained the group's logo which Ross designed. The group even had this image printed on T shirts and sweatshirts. The NZNFZC also sold a list of publications and related leaflets. A wall map was also a key product, the idea came from Rangiora local, Sam Hobson.<sup>99</sup> The items were sold around the country providing a welcome form of cash flow to fund mail outs and lecture tours.

Merchandise had other important roles aside from revenue gathering. The display of stickers and posters drew attention to the campaign. The group also used the products as an educational tool. On the back of all the stickers was a statement about the NZNFZC and its role in trying to reduce the threat of nuclear weapons. Ross believed that many would not read a leaflet on the Committee, but were more likely to read the back of stickers.<sup>100</sup> Apart from stickers appearing on individual's cars and letterboxes, the NZNFZC stickers gained national attention when the Committee sent stickers and anti-nuclear materials to all Members of Parliament in a project entitled Busy Beehive. It gained media attention when some Labour

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<sup>98</sup> Larry Ross, 'Strategy for the Peace Movement', *New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee Newsletter*, June / July 1983, p. 2. Emphasis in original.

<sup>99</sup> Chris King, 'The Nuclear-Freeing of Rangiora', Kate Dewes Personal Collection, p. 1.

<sup>100</sup> Larry Ross, Interview with author, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2004.

MPs displayed the stickers.<sup>101</sup> This action led to Speaker, Sir Richard Harrison asking for the stickers to be removed from the Parliament Chamber as they could be seen as a visual interjection.<sup>102</sup> Marilyn Waring also posted a sticker on her office door which was seen in news footage when she made headlines with her nuclear stance.<sup>103</sup> The NZNFZC continued with this strategy and sent out a NWFZ wall map to every MP, media centre and peace group prior to the 1984 election, while they had previously sent the map and pamphlets to every Council in the country.<sup>104</sup> Production of material provided a means of keeping the issue firmly in the public eye.



*Examples of some products sold by the NZNFZC. Photo by Author.*

Another form of campaigning and fundraising for the group was the use of the New Zealand Nuclear Free petitions. The NZNFZC launched two petitions prior to 1984, one of which gained 52,000 signatures before being presented to Labour MP Mary Batchelor outside

<sup>101</sup> "Nuclear Free N.Z." Bumper Stickers Starts Uproar in Beehive', *New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee Newsletter*, September 1982, p. 12.

<sup>102</sup> 'Battle lines drawn in nuclear 'conflict'', *Star*, 13<sup>th</sup> May 1982, p. 24.

<sup>103</sup> 'With Your Help Our Programme for the Remainder of 1984', *New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee Newsletter*, August / September 1984, p. 2.

<sup>104</sup> Larry Ross, 'Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones in New Zealand', *New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee Newsletter*, October / November 1983, p. 2.

parliament on the 5<sup>th</sup> of August 1983.<sup>105</sup> The form was not only used as a way to place pressure on the Government, but as a way of connecting people to the peace movement. The petition, which was signed by 70% of those approached, had a space for people to be contacted if they wished to become involved.<sup>106</sup> It also served as a way to request donations. Once a person had signed they would be asked if they would be willing to give money to the campaign. The NZNFZC reported to the CND, to whom it supplied merchandise, that 50% of those asked would donate anything from 20 cents to 10 dollars.<sup>107</sup> Yet despite using subscriptions, merchandise sales and the petition, the Committee continued to have financial woes. Due to the cost of printing, the group was at times in debt and never managed to realise the idea of having Larry Ross as a paid worker, instead he remained a volunteer.<sup>108</sup> To ease the financial worries the group reduced the number of free mailings and continued to ask for money. It did so by referring to itself as a proven peace organisation – one with results. As with the wider campaign, the NZNFZC also relied on the sense of urgent threat as a measure to ask for funding. 'All wealth, human achievement, life, hopes – All is lost if peace fails; and the dangers of war multiply. Fulltime peacemakers must multiply to counter billions invested in destruction. Peace giving should be voted the highest priority – for human survival.'<sup>109</sup>

Alongside the fundraising strategy which made the work of the group possible, the Committee focused on educational activities. It reasoned that it was common sense to oppose nuclear war and that the facts simply needed to be presented. A core activity of the group was its newsletter, which formed a part of this strategy. The newsletter was sent out to supporters and to some Councils sporadically throughout the year. The publication featured progress reports on the campaign, with details about local group activity. This included updates on the local body campaigns and the percentage of New Zealanders living in NWFZs. The newsletter also featured tips for small local peace groups, with the regional reports also being suggested as examples to follow. Another key component of the newsletter was that it included contributions from Ross and occasionally by other members such as Bob Leonard on nuclear

<sup>105</sup> 'Petition Delivered to Parliament', *New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee Newsletter*, October / November 1983, p. 2.

<sup>106</sup> Larry Ross, 'Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones in New Zealand', *New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee Newsletter*, October / November 1983, p. 2.

<sup>107</sup> 'Fundraising', *CND Newsletter*, June 1982, Kate Dewes Personal Collection.

<sup>108</sup> *New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee Newsletter*, March 1982, p. 1.

<sup>109</sup> 'Donations and Support', *New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee Newsletter*, 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1981, p. 2.

threat. Articles included 'Global Co-operation or Annihilation',<sup>110</sup> 'Humanity Close to Self-Extinction'<sup>111</sup> and 'Nuclear War – The Final Epidemic: "Prevention is the Only Remedy"'.<sup>112</sup>

The NZNFZC also sought to educate the public through oral presentations. The most prominent example of this is the lecture tours that Larry Ross undertook. The group also sponsored the tour of others, such as U.S. Colonel David Hackworth, who was one of America's most decorated soldiers. He visited New Zealand in September 1984.<sup>113</sup> The lecture tours again saw the nuclear free message promoted throughout the country in both rural and urban areas. Alongside its educational benefits, the tours also occasionally resulted in the formation of new peace groups and local NWFZ campaigns. Ross also represented the NZNFZC at other speaking engagements. He spoke at public events like the Christchurch Peace Festival held on March 20<sup>th</sup> 1983, organised by the NZNFZC and the City Council, in celebration of the first anniversary of Christchurch being declared a NWFZ.<sup>114</sup> Ross also spoke at high schools; in some instances the school would later declare itself a nuclear free zone.<sup>115</sup>

Apart from educating the general public, the group also saw itself in the role of educating members of local peace groups and empowering them to run a local NWFZ campaign. However, the NZNFZC was rarely directly involved in local NWFZ campaigns except for those in the Canterbury region. Distance meant that the organisation relied on groups to keep it informed of when zones were established.<sup>116</sup> Ross stated they helped groups involved in the local campaigns when they knew about them. 'Often I didn't know about it. I mean they were inspired by what we suggested but they did it all themselves. We gave help where we could with kits and suggestions ...'.<sup>117</sup> This was done through the newsletter, but also through resource papers on how to initiate NWFZs. Peace Movement New Zealand also looked at producing a similar kind of kit for groups; however it was abandoned when they realised that

<sup>110</sup> Larry Ross, 'Global Co-operation or Annihilation', *New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee Newsletter*, August / September 1983, p. 2.

<sup>111</sup> Larry Ross, 'Humanity Close to Self-Extinction', *New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee Newsletter*, December 1983 / January 1984, p. 1.

<sup>112</sup> Bob Leonard, 'Nuclear War – The Final Epidemic: "Prevention is the Only Remedy"', *New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee Newsletter*, May / June 1983, p. 8.

<sup>113</sup> 'Government M.P. Urges "High Level of Activity" From Anti – Nuclear Movement', *New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee Newsletter*, August / September 1984, p. 1.

<sup>114</sup> Larry Ross, 'Christchurch Celebrates First Anniversary of NWFZ', *New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee Newsletter*, May / June 1983, p. 1.

<sup>115</sup> 'News from the Regions', *Peace Movement New Zealand Newsletter*, November 1982, p. 5.

<sup>116</sup> Larry Ross, 'Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone Cities', *New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee Newsletter*, May / June 1983, p. 9.

<sup>117</sup> Larry Ross, Interview with Ruth Greenaway, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> June 2003, Peace Oral History Project of Otautahi / Christchurch.



the NZNFZC had already produced a suitable tool for peace groups.<sup>118</sup> The resources included a leaflet on 'Implementing Nuclear Free Zones' which was adapted from the London branch of the CND.<sup>119</sup> Larry Ross also wrote his own two page guide called 'How to Initiate a Local Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone'.<sup>120</sup> The resource had six sections which covered assessing past failures, educating the public and Councillors, presenting a proposal to the Council, implementing a zone and what political action to take if you fail again. It was a part of the NZNFZC focus on the growth of local peace movements, who would in effect be the grass roots arm of the national NWFZ campaign. Ross described the Committee's role as an advisor, while strengthening the wider nuclear free New Zealand movement.

We would make up presentations for the different councils and as a centre the Nuclear Free Zone Committee helped local neighbourhood groups, because our big emphasis was on the formation of independent neighbourhood groups. These peace groups would try and make their area nuclear free and otherwise help in the national campaign to make New Zealand nuclear free ... and the local groups in making presentations to councils, would come to us, 'What can we do? How do we do it?' and we would advise them on petitions, on lobbying and what are the arguments, we'd make up arguments that they could use to persuade councillors that it was an issue they should look at and vote on.<sup>121</sup>

Alongside the primary efforts of fundraising and education, the NZNFZC undertook other activities. While the groups saw the local NWFZs as a step, the focus on the nationwide zone saw activity focused at Members of Parliament. This took the form of direct lobbying of MPs through letters and submissions, particularly to the Select Committee on Arms and Disarmament. The direct challenge to national politicians continued in the lead up to the 1984 election. Peace groups throughout the country were aware that the election would be a watershed moment for the nuclear free cause. One part of the attempt to keep pressure on the Government in the lead up to the crucial election was the Votes for Peace campaign led by Ray Galvin, a Presbyterian Minister. The NZNFZC became a partner in this activity and they produced a combined leaflet.<sup>122</sup> The Votes for Peace campaign followed similar lines to the Auckland CND local body register that was run prior to the 1983 local body elections where candidates across the country were asked for their position on nuclear weapons and the result

<sup>118</sup> 'Peace Movement New Zealand Annual Report, October 1982 – September 1983', Kate Dewes Personal Collection.

<sup>119</sup> 'Implementing Nuclear Free Zones', MB 396, Box 1, Folder 1, Item 1/9, Macmillan Brown Library.

<sup>120</sup> Larry Ross, 'How to Initiate a Local Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zone', MB 396, Box 1, Folder 1, Item 1/1b, Macmillan Brown Library.

<sup>121</sup> Larry Ross, Interview with author, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2004.

<sup>122</sup> Votes for Peace, MS-Papers 4462-1, ATL.

published in newspapers. Votes for Peace adopted the idea and applied it to parliamentary candidates and parties. The campaign focused on rallying a peace vote and making sure the nuclear debate was a key issue in the election. The NZNFZC produced merchandise for the campaign, including 'Vote for Peace' car stickers.<sup>123</sup> After the 1984 election of the Labour Party, the efforts shifted not only to the formation of anti-nuclear legislation, but to spread the New Zealand Nuclear Free message around the world. Ambassador kits were produced for anyone that was travelling overseas.<sup>124</sup> Larry Ross later undertook tours abroad and would produce badges based on the New Zealand logo for the individual countries.<sup>125</sup>

The New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee was crucial component of the local Council NWFZ declarations. While generally not directly involved in the local efforts, the committee provided a public front for the national Council campaign and it publicised widely the growing local nuclear free zones. The NZNFZC also provided an impetus to the formation of groups and local campaigns through its lecture tours and supported the groups through various forms of education. While the NZNFZC became widely associated with the local body campaign, it was only a part of the Committee's operation. The Committee had the wider goal of a nuclear free New Zealand and saw the Councils as a step in this direction. This is not a unique trait to the NZNFZC; rather the goals were similar to the wider peace movement. The diverse range of activities of the NZNFZC were matched by the broad activities undertaken by large and small peace groups throughout the country, where the local council campaign was just an element of the attempt to have New Zealand declared nuclear free and for many groups the attainment of a Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific. The Committee exemplified this when it continued to campaign for nuclear disarmament after the country became nuclear free. The NZNFZC still operates under the new name of New Zealand Nuclear Free Peacemaking Association. Larry Ross, who was awarded a Queen Service Award in 1988 for his efforts, continues to run the organisation in Christchurch.<sup>126</sup> Throughout his peace work, Ross was a key advocate of grassroots involvement in the local NWFZs. As such, he is an important figure in forming the prevailing discourse about the zones.

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<sup>123</sup> Votes for Peace, MS-Papers 4462-1, ATL.

<sup>124</sup> *Nuclear – Free: journal of the Nuclear Free Zone Committee*, March / April 1985, p. 2.

<sup>125</sup> Examples are shown in the previous image.

<sup>126</sup> 'Investiture invitation', Larry Ross Personal Collection.

## CHAPTER TWO

### PERVADING MYTHS

The original aim of this research was to look at the processes involved in developing NWFZs throughout New Zealand. This was based on my initial assumption that the zones had little practical significance and therefore the benefits of the zones came from the processes involved in forming them. These assumptions were very much based on the discourse surrounding the zones. This chapter will examine some of the key strands of that discourse. Most of the beliefs about the importance of the zones came from individuals from key peace groups, notably Larry Ross. The rhetoric of peace workers included tackling the issues of jurisdiction and the importance of symbolism. The discourse also reinforced the perceived grassroots nature of the zones and how the process of developing them educated and mobilised the public into action. This mobilisation was seen as a reaction to the perceived threat faced and also as response to the assertion that people were agents of change. The discourse surrounding the local Government NWFZs also reinforced the beliefs about the political effectiveness of the movement. The views of people, like Ross, appear to be echoed not only by contemporaries in local peace groups, but have been reinforced by accounts of the movement in secondary literature.

The jurisdiction of Councils to make any statement over nuclear weapons was frequently a matter of dispute. Opponents of the NWFZs rightly stated that making a declaration was beyond the roles and responsibilities of local Government. Councils had no say over matters of defence and foreign policy and therefore they had no means to enforce the declarations, seemingly making them of little practical significance. Councillors and members of the public, alike would comment, at times in jest, about the effectiveness of the zones comparing the stand to declaring a city as the sunshine capital of the world or a crime free city.<sup>127</sup> These discussions over jurisdiction led to the response from proponents that the zones were never intended as literal. Proponents rejected the idea that a NWFZ would be able to prevent a country from either transporting nuclear weapons, or indeed dropping them in these

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<sup>127</sup> Marion Pathey-Jones, 'Nuclear free zone', *Dominion*, 20<sup>th</sup> April 1982, p. 8; L. Geo King, 'More than talk required', *Evening Standard*, 14<sup>th</sup> July, 1982; Sir Michael Fowler, 'Sunday News Article – April 11, 1982', Town Clerk's File, 0000:2140:60/4915 pt. 1, (Nuclear Power [General]), Wellington City Archives; H.W.R. Peterson, 'Next Step', *Evening Post*, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1982, p. 4.



zones. This did not deter peace groups from using the zones as a reason why nuclear ships should not enter ports, such as in Wellington.<sup>128</sup> However, this reasoning more on the grounds that the zones represented the opposition of the public to nuclear weapons, and the consequential ship visits rather than them being legally banned. This highlights a key component of why the zones were important, it was what they symbolised. The necessary symbolic nature of nuclear weapon free zones was echoed in secondary literature. The issue of jurisdiction was not limited to the New Zealand experience. Thomas Rochon has written about anti-nuclear movements in Western Europe and asserts that the zones were symbolic due to this lack of jurisdiction and therefore had 'limited practical significance'.<sup>129</sup> Stuart McMillan also referred to the NWFZs within the New Zealand context as being beyond the powers of councils and like Rochon questioned their practical significance.<sup>130</sup> In questioning the practical significance discourse focused on what the zones symbolised and why nuclear weapon free declarations were a valid stance to take.

Three major components of the argument regarding symbolism will be discussed. The first states that symbolic measures had a place not only in society but in politics. The second justifies what the symbolic measures of NWFZs represented. The final was explains what a symbolic gesture was used for in the nuclear argument.

The first argument addressed the validity of symbolic measures. The United Nations (UN) provided one of the peace groups strongest cornerstones when pursuing the goal of a local zone. The UN urged the creation of NWFZs as a form of 'confidence building measure'.<sup>131</sup> The zones were said to help create a more favourable climate for arms limitations. While the UN is the domain of states, to whom this message was aimed, this did not prevent the peace movement from using this statement as an endorsement for developing local Government zones. The peace movement highlighted other widely accepted forms of symbolism in order to legitimise the NWFZs. Ross referred to flags and the mayoral chains as examples of accepted forms of symbolism.<sup>132</sup> Secondary literature also sought to explain the presence of symbolism.

<sup>128</sup> 'CANWAR letter from P. McDonald (CANWAR Co-ordinator), Peace Movement Aotearoa Records, 91-124-1, ATL; Les Church (Peace Squadron spokesperson) Media release of telegram to USS Texas, Wellington Peace Squadron: Papers, 91-042, ATL; 'Ritchie Protest Speech Queried', *Dominion*, 11<sup>th</sup> August 1983, p. 9.

<sup>129</sup> Thomas Rochon, *Mobilizing for Peace: The Anti-nuclear Movements in Western Europe*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988, pp. 123, 193.

<sup>130</sup> McMillan, p. 31.

<sup>131</sup> 'End the Arms Race, Make a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone', NZNFC Map, Larry Ross Personal Collection.

<sup>132</sup> Larry Ross, Interview with Author, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2004; Larry Ross, Interview with Ruth Greenaway, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> June 2003.

The secondary texts focused on the symbolic nature of other anti-nuclear activities. Wade Huntley stated, somewhat unsympathetically that the entire anti-nuclear policy was symbolic, not simply Council declarations.<sup>133</sup> Eleanor Hodges argues that the symbolic nature of NWFZs was not limited to the local Government zones and suggested that there are NWFZs on 5 levels: citizens (personal declarations), semi-official (where Hodges placed Council declarations), national, regional and international. While the latter three are enforceable, Hodges believed that the New Zealand case showed that all forms of zones can be effective and she goes on to suggest that all are symbolic.<sup>134</sup>

While all nuclear-free zones are political measures aimed at preventing or limiting the presence or proliferation of nuclear weapons in certain areas, all those which concern the habitable areas of the earth are also to a greater or lesser degree symbolic gestures.<sup>135</sup>

The presence of symbolic measures was not the driving argument. The peace movement focused on what the zones represented.

The second component of the symbolism argument looks at what declarations represented. The anti-nuclear movement suggested that the NWFZs that were spreading throughout New Zealand were not simply a reflection of a handful of activists in an area, nor of course, representing the wishes of only Councillors. Zones were said to be representing the views of a majority of citizens. It was asserted that in most areas over 70% of the population were in favour of their Councils making a declaration.<sup>136</sup> The zones were clearly intended to be viewed as having a strong public mandate. That the NWFZs were an indicator of public opinion was also a common theme in the secondary literature, which frequently connected this support to the 1984 general election result. David Pitt stated that NWFZs were a sign of strong public opinion, he connected the percentage of people living in such zones with the percentage that elected the Labour Government of 1984.<sup>137</sup> McMillan queried the correlation between the 65%

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<sup>133</sup> Wade Huntley, *Security or Spectacle? Foreign Policy Realism and Nuclear Free New Zealand*, Canberra: Peace Research Centre, Australian National University, 1993, p. 18.

<sup>134</sup> Eleanor Hodges, *David & Goliath in the Ocean of Peace: Case Studies of "Nuclearism", "Nuclear Allergy" and "the Kiwi Disease"*, PhD Thesis, University of California, 1990, pp. 26 -7.

<sup>135</sup> Hodges, p. 27.

<sup>136</sup> Larry Ross, 'Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones in New Zealand', *New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee Newsletter*, October / November 1983, p. 2.

<sup>137</sup> David Pitt, 'Nuclear-Free Zones: An Idea Whose Time Has Come', in, David Pitt and Gordon Thompson (eds.), *Nuclear-Free Zones*, London/Sydney: Croom Helm, 1987, p. 3.

living in zones to the 63.4% who voted for a party with an anti-nuclear ship policy.<sup>138</sup> I agree with McMillan's assessment that the correlation 'is interesting; but much more evidence would have to be gathered before it could be described as anything other than a coincidence.'<sup>139</sup> The difficulty does not lie so much in the idea that anti-nuclear supporters would vote for parties with an anti-nuclear policy, rather with the simplicity of the equation. While 65% of the population lived in NWFZs, there is little conclusive evidence to substantiate peace movement claims that a majority of citizens were aware of and supportive of these zones and that they would then go on to vote for an anti-nuclear Party. The levels of public opinion around the nuclear issue could exist without a majority being active in the peace movement. When the public were not involved in campaigning for the zones, as evident in the following case studies, it is difficult to continue with the assertion that the NWFZs represented the majority.

The final idea focuses on why this particular form of symbolic expression was used. Firstly, it needs to be acknowledged that the peace movement, in its various forms, took part in a wide range of other activities and campaigns. Ross suggests why the group would use such a symbolic measure.

Because our culture is a symbolic culture in many ways that it's one way open to us because we haven't got our finger on the button, at least we can show we oppose that, we oppose nuclear deterrence, nuclear weapons and particularly nuclear weapons in New Zealand. And by having councils declare that throughout the country and councils everywhere then that shows that a majority of citizens are against the bomb and in favour of a nuclear free country. And one step in that direction is to have nuclear free councils.<sup>140</sup>

The zones were not only symbolic gestures but also political measures. The use of NWFZs was also seen as being in response to the limited power people had to control the nuclear arms race. This is of course in contrast to the ongoing rhetoric about the power of people to create change. Using symbolism may have been an acknowledgement that control of the actual means of detonation was beyond the grassroots's reach. This was not seen as a reason for defeatism, but rather that the views of people needed to be expressed to those perceived to have that power, in this case the New Zealand Government. During Helen Caldicott's visit in 1983, she expressed similar sentiments in a radio interview when stating that the public could

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<sup>138</sup> McMillan, p. 31.

<sup>139</sup> McMillan, p. 32.

<sup>140</sup> Larry Ross, Interview with author, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2004.

change the minds of politicians whose focus was on re-election.<sup>141</sup> Secondary literature reaffirmed the role of the zones as being a political step. Hodges states that the spreading of local zones was a political tool.<sup>142</sup> Alley portrayed the use of the Council declarations as signifying legitimacy and furthering the symbolic anti-nuclear campaign.<sup>143</sup> The peace movement also expressed the belief that by creating a number of zones they could put pressure on such politicians. Yet, the connection between the New Zealand Government and the Governments of Nuclear powers did not factor into the arguments of peace people.

Linked to the argument over what the zones represented and role of public opinion is the grassroots nature of the wider Council campaign. Central to the discourse surrounding New Zealand local Government NWFZs is that they were the result of grassroots action. The zones were said to be a product of 'ordinary' people who had campaigned and fought for their councils to make a nuclear weapon free declaration. An example from within the movement is Will Foote's book, *The Power of People: How Nelson Province Became Nuclear Free*, which outlined the activities that lead to NWFZs in that district.<sup>144</sup> The nuclear free movement was not only labelled as grassroots by participants. The idea was reaffirmed in media reports. One such example was an Editorial in the *Wanganui Chronicle* that described the movement. 'It is a grassroots movement that from small beginnings in this country has persevered, overcome obstacles and moved from being radical to thoroughly acceptable'.<sup>145</sup> This statement affirmed imagery of a growing movement beating the odds.

Ross suggests the zones not only represented the wishes of the people but also encouraged others to join the campaign.<sup>146</sup> The view that NWFZs would help gain more supporters for the peace movement was not only discussed in the 1980s period, but has also been reinforced in accounts since. Ross wrote a brief history of the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee. In this he wrote about the benefits of the campaign.

The effectiveness of the local body nuclear-free zone campaign is only partly understood. It reached many, many people that protest movements or radical political

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<sup>141</sup> Helen Caldicott, Interview with Sharon Crosbie, National Radio, 7<sup>th</sup> April 1983, MB 396, Box 1, Folder 1, Item 2/20a, Macmillan Brown Library.

<sup>142</sup> Hodges, p. 27.

<sup>143</sup> Alley, p. 200.

<sup>144</sup> Will Foote, *The Power of People: How Nelson Province Became Nuclear Free*, Nelson: W.J. Foote, 1999.

<sup>145</sup> 'Anti-nuke Campaign', *Wanganui Chronicle*, 29<sup>th</sup> November 1984.

<sup>146</sup> Larry Ross, Interview with Ruth Greenaway, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> June 2003.

parties do not normally reach in the West. Ordinary farmers, office workers, doctors, school children, housewives and whole families and schools as well as, of course, working people generally and their unions joined to campaign to have their own local area to be declared a 'nuclear-free zone' ... The simple secret of the local body nuclear-free campaign was that people could 'Think Globally and Act Locally'.<sup>147</sup>

Other authors have written about how the nuclear free message was spread beyond the realm of radical politics. Michael Pugh suggested that the spread of the zones to conservative rural communities was the result of a wider opinion shift in 1983.<sup>148</sup> That Pugh focused on rural communities is interesting. The concept that the peace movement was reaching new places could be applied equally to smaller cities, not just the conservative rural communities in 1983. Pugh is also more explicit on the nature of the NWFZ movement and like others reinforced the early rhetoric by stating the movement was strongly grassroots.<sup>149</sup> Rochon contributed to the subject of people's participation by writing about benefits of the local zones campaign. He moved beyond the idea of the campaign reaching new members to the idea of it uniting peace groups. He also suggests the campaign would give a peace group a unifying goal. Rochon pointed to the visible actions of petitioning as being so beneficial that groups would delay presenting it to the Council.<sup>150</sup> This is seen not just in European context, but similar statements came from those involved in the New Zealand peace movement.<sup>151</sup>

Issues relating to the grassroots nature of the zones formation also centre on suggestions as to how zones should be established. The guide put out by the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee (NZNFZC) stated that peace groups should approach Councils with forms of lobbying, educational activities, stalls and petitioning, including door knocking. These guides therefore served not only the purpose of resourcing people, but also in reinforcing that it was up to individuals to become involved in creating change. In the secondary literature accounts, Hodges tackled (albeit in a limited capacity) the processes she believed were behind the formation of the NWFZs. She gave an example of an individual lobbying her Council. This reiterated the notion of a grassroots people's movement. However, Hodges did

<sup>147</sup> Larry Ross, 'Brief History of the New Zealand Nuclear-Free Zone Campaign', Kate Dewes Personal Collection, p. 2.

<sup>148</sup> Michael Pugh, *The ANZUS Crisis, Nuclear Visiting and Deterrence*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 109.

<sup>149</sup> Pugh, p. 109.

<sup>150</sup> Rochon, p. 123.

<sup>151</sup> Larry Ross, Interview with author, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2004.



not only use an individual as an example,<sup>152</sup> she made a rather bold assertion about how the zones developed.

Declaring one's home, workplace, church or whatever a nuclear-free zone is easy in a country in which no nuclear weapons are stored or manufactured; easy to do, easy to ask others to do. It seems probable that people with no strong feelings about the matter would accept the stickers or declare themselves in favour of the idea simply to be polite, to end the interruption or because they thought it made no difference one way or another ... Nevertheless, if enough nuclear free zones are declared, the symbolic act becomes a political weapon, and this is what happened in New Zealand. Reluctant local and regional officials were told that if they did not go with (what seemed to be) the flow they would lose their incumbency – and they often did.<sup>153</sup>

This account is particularly interesting. The assumption about the ease of declaring the zones and going with the flow raises two contradicting points. That it was easy to achieve would get an automatic refutation from some I have interviewed, yet in some instances declarations did fit into this model. While making statements about the ease of the process Hodges still labels Council officials as 'reluctant', something which will be examined here in the case studies. In no references of how the zones were formed did the literature acknowledge that some Councils appear to have made the declarations with no grassroots action involved in the process. Supportive Councillors were congratulated and pledged voter support, but they were seen to have been responding to the demands of the public. This can also be seen when the NZNFZC suggested that if zones failed to be declared on the first attempt it was due to the Councillors not having been educated by peace groups. The responsibility for a zones failure and success was placed firmly in the hands of the people.

The process of forming zones, as suggested by the NZNFZC, was to simultaneously educate the public and the Council, on the dangers of nuclear weapons and the ways people could contribute to the campaign against them. Arguments focused on showing the threat facing New Zealanders due to increased nuclear capabilities and the role of ANZUS in making New Zealand a target. The hope was to change public opinion. April Carter confirmed this in her study of peace movements, believing the formation of the zones was part of changing the public opinion.<sup>154</sup> Public debates held over the local nuclear weapon free zones highlighted these issues and therefore were deemed to have educated people to the point where they

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<sup>152</sup> Hodges, pp. 216 -7.

<sup>153</sup> Hodges, pp. 337 – 8.

<sup>154</sup> April Carter, *Peace Movements: International Protest and World Politics since 1945*, Essex: Longman, 1992, p. 174.



could accept the proposition of a New Zealand nuclear free zone.<sup>155</sup> This of course ignores the common subject of debate in local NWFZ attempts, the issue of jurisdiction, which was not a key component of the national debate. Secondary literature also looked at the role of education.<sup>156</sup>

The NWFZs were perceived to be effective, not only due to the education and publicity that may have been garnered in their own areas. The process was also seen to be a training area for peace group members. The skills of lobbying to create local NWFZs were skills that Ross envisioned would be crucial in ongoing campaigning for the 1984 election and beyond.<sup>157</sup> This fits into a wider view of the zones usefulness in achieving the broader goal of having a nuclear free New Zealand. Preparation for the national campaign was not just reflected in the skills that people in peace groups were expected to learn, but also in the very nature of those groups. Ross made it clear that he wanted to see the development of independent peace groups. The existence of the independent peace groups was a crucial driving force behind the formation of PMNZ. The 300 peace groups in operation were the result of the diversity of views and the non-hierarchical beliefs of many involved. The number of neighbourhood peace groups was used to show the extent of grassroots feeling.

Much of the discourse surrounding the local government NWFZs is focused on the roles of people in making a difference. This can be found in statements about what the zones represented and also in the wider discussion surrounding the grassroots nature of the campaign. The importance of people was even more overt in statements made by Larry Ross in a NZNFZC Newsletter. He stated that people must act in order to survive. He also sent out copies of Earl Mountbatten's famous speech about the dangers of nuclear war.

It is up to us, the people to make the required moral and philosophical choices. Since the threat to humanity is the work of human beings, it is up to man to save himself from himself. The world now stands on the brink of the final abyss. Let us all resolve to take all possible practical steps to ensure that we do not, through our own folly, go over the edge.<sup>158</sup>

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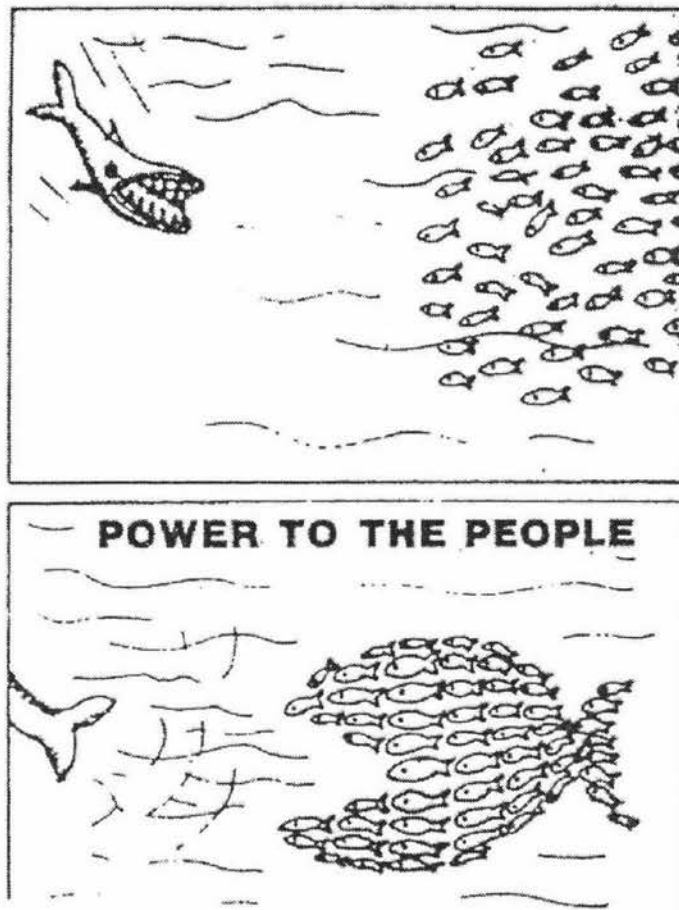
<sup>155</sup> Larry Ross, 'Build up of Public Awareness and Campaign', *New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee Newsletter*, June / July 1985, p. 1.

<sup>156</sup> Rochon, p. 123; Andrew Mack, *Denuclearisation in Australia and New Zealand: Issues and Prospects*, Canberra: Peace Research Centre, Australian National University, 1988, p. 24.

<sup>157</sup> Larry Ross, 'Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones in New Zealand', *New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee Newsletter*, October / November 1983, p. 2.

<sup>158</sup> Earl Mountbatten, in, 'End the Arms Race, Make a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone', NZNFZC Map, Larry Ross Personal Collection.

This statement was adopted and used by several peace groups throughout the country, as were similar quotes from notables, such as the statement made by Edmund Burke about the importance of action, 'No one made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could only do a little.'<sup>159</sup> There was a guiding belief that if enough people could see the danger and oppose nuclear weapons then they could make a difference.



*A cartoon depicting the key theme of people power. Image from New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee Newsletter, May 1984, p. 5.*

It was this key belief in people making a difference that drove the discourse surrounding New Zealand local government NWFZs. Grassroots discourse was not limited to local government NWFZs, but features in the wider discourse about public participation in the nuclear debate. This can be found in accounts of the World Court by Dewes and Green, for

<sup>159</sup> Edmund Burke, cited in Dr John Campbell-MacDonald speech to Palmerston North City Council and Rangiora Council Presentation, Dr John Campbell-MacDonald Personal Collection.

example.<sup>160</sup> Foote also attributed the New Zealand nuclear free legislation as being a result of this wider sense of public participation, which included the local political endeavours.

The New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone, Disarmament and Arms Control Act was the culmination of a campaign. Like the eruption of a volcano, it was the result of relentless pressure from below, an implacable movement that started in your home and mine, that spread to neighbourhood group, to local politics, to Parliament.<sup>161</sup>

The belief in this grassroots nature is found in the key areas of what the zones represented as well as descriptions of how they were achieved by public activity. There was an overriding assumption of the public being involved in or aware of the zones being formed. How then can we interpret the zones as a 'sign of public opinion' if the public was not actively involved? Lack of opposition does not equate to complicit support. And herein lays part of the problem. We cannot talk about the importance of, nor nature of a local nuclear free zone campaign as a singular and coherent entity. There are too many strands, too many differences – the zones were products of varying processes as the case studies which follow will demonstrate.

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<sup>160</sup> Dewes and Green, *Aotearoa / New Zealand at the World Court*.

<sup>161</sup> Foote, pp. 9 – 10.

## CHAPTER THREE

### CASE STUDIES

This chapter will examine the case studies of Wellington, Palmerston North and Eltham, each in separate sections. The case studies will investigate the formation and impact of each Council's nuclear free declaration. This allows us to examine how the cases match or challenge the discourse about wider local Government NWFZs.

#### WELLINGTON

In 1982 Wellington was declared a NWFZ amidst considerable public controversy. 'Stupendous nonsense' is how Wellington Mayor Sir Michael Fowler described the nuclear weapon free declaration following the April 14<sup>th</sup> decision.<sup>162</sup> This case study will follow the declaration, lead by Labour Councillors, and the subsequent resignation of Fowler. It will also investigate the engagement of the peace movement with the idea of a zone in the context of ongoing nuclear ship visits to Wellington.

As the capital of New Zealand, Wellington had been a longstanding location of dissent and protest action. During the 1980s the trade union based New Zealand Council for World Peace (also known as Peace Council New Zealand / Aotearoa), WILPF, UNA, Campaign Against Nuclear Warships (CANWAR), Peace Squadron and the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship (APF) were all in operation in Wellington. In 1980, the city was also the setting for the peace conference which introduced the idea of personal NWFZ declarations. This move was immediately embraced by the majority of residents of one Wellington street.<sup>163</sup> However it was a large step to move from a street to an entire city.

The Mayor Michael Fowler, was first approached about a Wellington NWFZ in 1981. The President of the New Zealand Council for World Peace, Gerald O'Brien, visited him in person. The organisation secretary, Des Brough, also wrote to Fowler about the possibility of Wellington becoming a NWFZ. When the issue was first raised in Wellington, there had been

<sup>162</sup> Sir Michael Fowler, 'N-ship welcome in Picton', *Evening Standard*, 16<sup>th</sup> April 1982, p. 1.

<sup>163</sup> 'A New initiative', *Epicentre News*, November 1981, Kate Dewes Personal Collection.

no declarations in New Zealand which could be used as an example. Instead the requests were reliant on using Australian examples. They were accompanied by a call for the Wellington Council to give leadership to the country on the nuclear issue. A subsequent letter to the Mayor from Gerald O'Brien flattered the Mayor and his record of leadership and his style.<sup>164</sup> As events would subsequently show, flattery was not in this case a successful strategy.

While the possibility of a NWFZ was raised in 1981 the lack of a favourable response saw the NZ Council for World Peace put the issue aside temporarily. However, the organisation raised the idea of a zone again in 1982. In March a letter was sent seeking a meeting to discuss the possibility of local action.<sup>165</sup> Apart from the actions of the NZ Council for World Peace; there was no evidence in the Council archive of other groups being directly involved in requesting a NWFZ. In fact, requests were limited to the few encounters of the NZ Council for World Peace and a submission by an individual, Vince Terreni. He was a former Auckland Central candidate for the Cheer Up Party prior to moving to Wellington in December 1981. His Auckland connection is indicated throughout his submission where he referred to the Devonport NWFZ and the attempts to have Auckland declared nuclear free. Terreni stated that there were two main arguments for a zone, firstly, as a moral gesture and secondly as an educational move. He stressed that of the two reasons, education was more important. The zones could educate 'populations and politicians'.<sup>166</sup> As Terreni wrote, a move for a NWFZ was being formed amongst certain Wellington City Councillors.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April Councillor Helene Ritchie gave notice that on April 14<sup>th</sup> she would move the motion that Wellington be declared a nuclear-weapon free zone. Ritchie, daughter of Czechoslovakian refugees had been in Council since 1977, was the leader of the Labour Caucus, who were informed of the motion.<sup>167</sup> She had no formal connection with the peace movement. Rather she had been introduced to semi formal politics through the women's movement. Ritchie was not aware of the Peace Council's approaches to the Mayor when she decided to raise the motion due to her personal concern about the nuclear issue.<sup>168</sup> The motion was seconded by fellow labour councillor Hazel Bibby, who had been President of the

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<sup>164</sup> Letter from Gerald O'Brien to Mayor Michael Fowler, 25<sup>th</sup> August 1981, NZ Council for World Peace Records, 91-014-2, ATL.

<sup>165</sup> Letter from Desmond Brough to Mayor Michael Fowler, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1982, Town Clerk's File, 0000:2140:60/4915 pt. 1, (Nuclear Power [General]), Wellington City Archives.

<sup>166</sup> Vince Terreni, submission, Town Clerk's File, 0000:2140:60/4915 pt. 1, (Nuclear Power [General]), Wellington City Archives, p. 3.

<sup>167</sup> Helene Ritchie, Interview with author, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2004.

<sup>168</sup> Helene Ritchie, Interview with author, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2004.

Federation of Progressive Associations, an umbrella residents' organisation.<sup>169</sup> Attached to the motion was an explanatory note which did not contain any expected justification, but rather a call for consensus amongst the Council factions of the Labour and Citizen group's. 'Because this issue is of such vital importance to the people of Wellington, we are hopeful that we can avoid it becoming simply a party political issue. A joint initiative would avoid such a development and we would therefore welcome any Citizens Councillors who are prepared to join us in proposing this motion'.<sup>170</sup> Ritchie's request was not met with the overwhelming consensus she had hoped for.

Mayor Fowler expressed his opposition to the motion publicly. He wrote in the *Sunday News* on April 11<sup>th</sup> and addressed two main points of opposition. Firstly, he appeared suspicious of the motives of the peace movement which had advocated for nuclear weapon free Councils and he accurately assumed that the plan was to 'knock off one Council after another'. He went on to say he believed local Government were being used as 'stooges for political purposes' and he was concerned a list of local NWFZs would be used to 'deny treaty obligations that we have with our allies.' Fowler was accurate in his views that the zones were for political purposes. However, this was hardly a revolutionary assumption, for the NWFZ campaign was one with clear political objectives of having a nuclear free New Zealand, which would impact on ship visits and therefore defence obligations. Fowler also raised a common objection by stating that a NWFZ was beyond the jurisdiction of local Government. He believed that Councils should not 'usurp' the functions of central Government and therefore the debate over a zone would waste the Councils time. Fowler further indicated he would vote against the motion.

I suppose that they will hold that people who vote against this motion are therefore in favour of nuclear weapons in the City of Wellington. Well, I will vote against it, because I think it is the sort of motion that says – 'I love God, mother and apple pie' or put another way, it is a motion analogous to the question "when did you stop beating your wife"... to pontificate about Wellington being a nuclear-weapon free zone is similar to making a policy statement banning wild elephants from the streets of Wellington or declaring that we are not in favour of rape, robbery and murder.<sup>171</sup>

<sup>169</sup> 'Candidates have their say', *Evening Post, Local Elections 1980 Supplement*, 25<sup>th</sup> September 1980, p. 3.

<sup>170</sup> Helene Ritchie, proposed motion, 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1982, Town Clerk's File, 0000:2140:60/4915 pt. 1, (Nuclear Power [General]), Wellington City Archives.

<sup>171</sup> Sir Michael Fowler, 'Sunday News Article – April 11, 1982', Town Clerk's File, 0000:2140:60/4915 pt. 1, (Nuclear Power [General]), Wellington City Archives.



Fowler softened his critique by stating that the Wellington City Council shared the Governments concern about nuclear testing and dumping of nuclear waste. He also referred to the controls on nuclear powered ships in order to keep citizens safe. However, despite these concessions Fowler remained strongly opposed to any resolution. He reiterated this position in an *Evening Post* article on the day of the meeting, again stating that the debate would be a waste of Council's time and if the motion was won, it would have no practical significance. He would not predict the result, however, he did say that the Citizen Councillors would not be directed to vote as a caucus.<sup>172</sup> Ritchie believed that there was probably compulsion amongst the Citizens to follow Fowlers lead, although he may have assumed he would have their support and would not have considered otherwise.<sup>173</sup> The *Evening Post* appeared to agree with Fowlers opposition to the idea. An article which appeared more as an opinion piece, stated that the motion should not be passed due to ANZUS obligations.<sup>174</sup>

Cr Helene Ritchie was also engaged in public discussion prior to the meeting in which she stressed a statement of opposition to nuclear weapons was in her view the Council's responsibility. She described a scenario which would see the public and Council operations destroyed by a nuclear bomb being detonated in the city.<sup>175</sup> The proposed motion was given more publicity when it was announced that the USS Truxtun would visit Wellington in May 1982, just the day before the Council meeting.<sup>176</sup> Ritchie used the Truxtun visit to reinforce the perception of threat at the Council meeting where she said the upcoming visit of the ship could make Wellington a target.<sup>177</sup> Both Cr Ritchie and Bibby also believed that a Wellington declaration would be influential and that others would follow the example.<sup>178</sup> Bibby said as the largest Council, the statement would demonstrate that a trading port was not the place for nuclear weapons. Labour Cr Jenny Brough also agreed with this perspective believing it made Wellington a target.<sup>179</sup>

<sup>172</sup> Sir Michael Fowler, in, David Morris, 'Mayor blast nuke debate 'waste', *Evening Post*, 14<sup>th</sup> April 1982, p. 1.

<sup>173</sup> Helene Ritchie, Interview with author, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2004.

<sup>174</sup> 'Truxtun Visit', *Evening Post*, 14<sup>th</sup> April 1982, p. 2.

<sup>175</sup> Helene Ritchie, in, David Morris, 'Mayor blast nuke debate 'waste', *Evening Post*, 14<sup>th</sup> April 1982, p. 1.

<sup>176</sup> 'Truxtun pips zone debate', *Dominion*, 14<sup>th</sup> April 1982, p. 1.

<sup>177</sup> Helene Ritchie, in, Paul Moran, 'Shadow cast on Truxtun visit: Capital goes nuclear-free', *Dominion*, 15<sup>th</sup> April 1982, p. 1.

<sup>178</sup> Helene Ritchie, in, David Morris, 'Mayor blast nuke debate 'waste', *Evening Post*, 14<sup>th</sup> April 1982, p. 1; Hazel Bibby, in, Paul Moran, 'Shadow cast on Truxtun visit: Capital goes nuclear-free', *Dominion*, 15<sup>th</sup> April 1982, p. 1.

<sup>179</sup> Paul Moran, 'Shadow cast on Truxtun visit: Capital goes nuclear-free', *Dominion*, 15<sup>th</sup> April 1982, p. 1.

After the motion was discussed, it was narrowly passed, making Wellington the fifth council in the country to be declared a NWFZ. The decision received applause from the full public gallery. The Labour Councillors all voted in support and they were joined by two Citizen Councillors Elisabeth Campbell and David Bull. Following the decision, Bull stated he had no regrets over his decision and he did what he believed was appropriate.<sup>180</sup> Years later he informed Helene Ritchie that he had Quaker connections, which would undoubtedly have influenced his decision.<sup>181</sup> Cr Campbell was unwilling to comment on why she crossed the floor.<sup>182</sup> The Mayor was said to have been furious at the decision which could be expected given his vocal opposition prior to the meeting.<sup>183</sup>

Fowler did not cease expressing his contempt for the zone, following its successful passage. He continued to point to its lack of effectiveness, calling the NWFZ 'stupendous nonsense'.<sup>184</sup> Yet, his reaction to the decision gave it additional publicity. Fowler used his indignation at the decision as a time to announce he was stepping down from the Wellington mayoralty at the end of his term. Two days after the resolution the *Dominion's* front page announced Fowlers decision. The article began by proclaiming 'Wellington's Mayor, Sir Michael Fowler, is to quit the mayoralty, in a move ignited by Wednesday night's Council decision declaring the city a nuclear weapon-free zone.'<sup>185</sup> The paper reported that Fowler was frustrated at the political nature of the Council. It stated his decision to quit was based on his unwillingness to engage in this political atmosphere. 'It was (an) irrelevant discussion. I was left out on a limb by my colleagues and I can't play the political game that seems to be required. I just can't do it ... It brings Wellington into disrepute and I won't be party to that.'<sup>186</sup> Fowler also lashed out at the Labour councillors, particularly the women, who dominated the Labour caucus.<sup>187</sup> He believed they played politics rather than working for the city.<sup>188</sup> This antagonism with some of the Labour councillors was not new. For example, earlier in April, Fowler had publicly apologised for calling Helene Ritchie a liar in the previous month.<sup>189</sup> The ongoing political tension within the council was responsible for his decision to quit rather than the

<sup>180</sup> David Bull, in, Martyn Gosling, 'Nonsense spurs Sir Michael to quit', *Dominion*, 16<sup>th</sup> April 1982, p. 1.

<sup>181</sup> Helene Ritchie, Interview with author, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2004.

<sup>182</sup> Martyn Gosling, 'Nonsense spurs Sir Michael to quit', *Dominion*, 16<sup>th</sup> April 1982, p. 1.

<sup>183</sup> Helene Ritchie, Interview with author, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2004.

<sup>184</sup> Sir Michael Fowler, 'N-ship welcome in Picton', *Evening Standard*, 16<sup>th</sup> April 1982, p. 1.

<sup>185</sup> Martyn Gosling, 'Nonsense spurs Sir Michael to quit', *Dominion*, 16<sup>th</sup> April 1982, p. 1.

<sup>186</sup> Sir Michael Fowler, in, Martyn Gosling, 'Nonsense spurs Sir Michael to quit', *Dominion*, 16<sup>th</sup> April 1982, p. 1.

<sup>187</sup> Martyn Gosling, 'Nonsense spurs Sir Michael to quit', *Dominion*, 16<sup>th</sup> April 1982, p. 1; 'Winners and Losers', *Evening Post*, 13<sup>th</sup> October 1980, p. 32.

<sup>188</sup> 'N-ship welcome in Picton', *Evening Standard*, 16<sup>th</sup> April 1982, p. 1.

<sup>189</sup> 'Fowler says sorry for 'lies' comment', *Dominion*, 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1982, p. 9.

specific NWFZ motion. Ritchie believed he misjudged the political situation and saw the passing of the motion and his resignation as a double victory.<sup>190</sup>

Ritchie was also featured in media coverage following the success of the declaration. She refuted statements that it would just become a symbolic gesture and believed there were ways the Council could put its declaration into action and see the city be known as the Peace Capital of the South Pacific. The actions she proposed included investigating the construction of fallout shelters as a Civil Defence measure. She also suggested that the nuclear issue could be assessed in the context of the city's bylaws. Ritchie also reiterated that the Wellington City Council was the most influential in the country and therefore the Government would take the declaration seriously.

The declaration certainly did gain the attention of Members of Parliament. Prime Minister, Rob Muldoon, commented on the NWFZ as being of no practical effect and described the action as 'fun and games'.<sup>191</sup> He also went on to say that the Government already supported a South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone. Despite this, he also said the Truxtun visit would go ahead and as far as he knew the ship had no nuclear weapons aboard.<sup>192</sup> The Labour MP from Miramar, Peter Neilson, was said to have commented on the decision and asked Parliament to congratulate the Wellington Council on its decision and suggested Parliament ask other local authorities to follow suit.<sup>193</sup> Not surprisingly there is no evidence in Hansard that this ever occurred. The Wellington declaration was used later in April by MP Richard Prebble as an example of New Zealander's desire for peace. In the introduction debate his Nuclear Free Zone (New Zealand) Bill, he challenged parliament to make a stand on the nuclear issue.

The New Zealand people want peace, and that is why city councils, such as the Wellington City Council have passed resolutions proclaiming nuclear – free zones. Churchmen, community leaders, scientists, and people of vision are calling upon us as legislators to find a political solution to the greatest political challenge of the age.<sup>194</sup>

The support of these Labour MPs for nuclear disarmament efforts was strengthened by their party colleagues in the Labour Party Conference held in Wellington in May 1982. The Conference resolved that, if elected, they would establish a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in New

<sup>190</sup> Helene Ritchie, Interview with author, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2004.

<sup>191</sup> Robert Muldoon, 'Council's "fun and games" not needed', *Evening Post*, 15<sup>th</sup> April 1982, p. 1.

<sup>192</sup> 'Council's "fun and games" not needed', *Evening Post*, 15<sup>th</sup> April 1982, p. 1.

<sup>193</sup> 'MP applauds nuclear move', *Evening Post*, 16<sup>th</sup> April 1982, p. 5.

<sup>194</sup> Richard Prebble, 'Nuclear Free Zone (New Zealand) Bill Introduction', NZPD (443), 29<sup>th</sup> April 1982, p. 653.

Zealand.<sup>195</sup> This Nuclear Free policy came at a time when there were few local government NWFZs to place pressure for any such a decision. By 1984 this situation had changed considerably.

Local body and Central Government politicians were not the only ones to comment on the Wellington resolution. Those both in support and opposition made their views known through letters to the Wellington City Council and to the letters to the editor pages of the two Wellington newspapers, the *Dominion* and *Evening Post*. Four people wrote to the newspapers in opposition. B. Matthewson of Plimmerton was cynical of what the zone could achieve and also extended his sympathy to the Mayor, requesting that he stay on as Mayor so as not to leave the citizens of Wellington at the mercy of the Labour Councillors.<sup>196</sup> While R.G. Stuart believed that ratepayers should have been consulted prior to the decision.<sup>197</sup> The response of H.W.R. Petersen was more light-hearted as he suggested other zones that the Council could implement, such as a drunken driver free zone.<sup>198</sup> Marion Pathey-Jones similarly found amusement in the decision. 'I was thrilled to hear that Wellington city Councillors have declared Wellington to be a nuclear weapon-free zone. May I suggest that, at their next meeting, they declare us to be the sunshine capital of the world and the most prominent cabbage-producing district in Europe.'<sup>199</sup>

Other responses to the papers were more supportive of the Council decision. Graeme H. McDonald wrote of his delight at the resolution.<sup>200</sup> While another message came from further a field. Norman Fletcher wrote from Parnell congratulating Wellington while objecting to the statements of politicians in opposition.

We will continue to say no by any means possible. And snide smiles from Mayor Fowler and Prime Minister Muldoon will only increase our determination. My house is nuclear free; let Parnell be nuclear free, Auckland, North Island – who knows where this "stupendous nonsense" will stop.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Newnham, p. 48.

<sup>196</sup> B. Matthewson, 'Nuclear Zoning', *Dominion*, 6<sup>th</sup> May 1982, p. 8.

<sup>197</sup> R.G. Stuart, 'What about the citizens', *Dominion*, 20<sup>th</sup> April 1982, p. 8.

<sup>198</sup> H.W.R. Petersen, 'Next Step', *Evening Post*, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1982, p. 4.

<sup>199</sup> Marion Pathey-Jones, 'Nuclear free zone', *Dominion*, 20<sup>th</sup> April 1982, p. 8.

<sup>200</sup> Graeme H. McDonald, 'Decision not useless', *Evening Post*, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1982, p. 2.

<sup>201</sup> Norman Fletcher, 'No to Nuclear Weapons', *Dominion*, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1982, p. 6.

While individuals wrote to the editors, the Mayor received letters from organisations. Educational organisations joined the support from trade unions from within Wellington. The Wellington branch of the Clerical Workers Union sent a letter congratulating the city on its resolution.<sup>202</sup> The Wellington section of the Public Service Association also expressed its support for the move upon the one year anniversary of the NWFZ declaration.<sup>203</sup> The Council also received letters of support from the Wellington Polytechnic Students' Association Executive, which informed the Mayor and the Councillors of their motion of support for the NWFZ on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April.<sup>204</sup> Gillian Woodward of the South Wellington Intermediate School Committee also informed the Council that the majority of their committee had voted in support of the NWFZ declaration made by Wellington City officials.<sup>205</sup> The Secretary of the Family Life Education Council, Beverly Morris, belatedly extended congratulations to the Mayor and Council on the organisations behalf.<sup>206</sup>

Representatives of peace, environmental and international organisations from throughout the country also added their voices in support of the decision. Messages of congratulations came from the Environment and Conservation Organisations of New Zealand executive committee<sup>207</sup>, as well as from Peace Action Tauranga (PACT)<sup>208</sup>. A telegraph from the Kapiti – Mana branch of the United Nations Association (UNA) congratulated the Council on the NWFZ, while also mentioning the limitations of the step. 'Most intelligent citizens quite understand that this motion of its self will not prevent "USS Truxtun" from visiting Wellington ... However, the motion does support the belief of many that nuclear weapons should be banned from this country in time of peace.'<sup>209</sup> A letter from Llewellyn Richard, Secretary of the National Consultative Committee on Disarmament (NCCD), also reinforced the NWFZs symbolic nature. The NCCD passed on its congratulation on behalf of its constituent members which included

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<sup>202</sup> Letter from the Wellington Branch of the Clerical Workers Union, 5<sup>th</sup> May 1982, Town Clerk's File, 0000:2140:60/4915 pt. 1, (Nuclear Power [General]), Wellington City Archives.

<sup>203</sup> Letter to Town Clerk from John C. Price (Wellington Section Secretary), 4<sup>th</sup> May 1983, Town Clerk's File, 0000:2140:60/4915 pt. 1, (Nuclear Power [General]), Wellington City Archives.

<sup>204</sup> Letter to Mayor and Councillors from Suzanne Willis (Student Co-Coordinator), 27<sup>th</sup> April 1982, Town Clerk's File, 0000:2140:60/4915 pt. 1, (Nuclear Power [General]), Wellington City Archives.

<sup>205</sup> Letter from Gillian Woodward to the Town Clerk, 14<sup>th</sup> June 1982, Town Clerk's File, 0000:2140:60/4915 pt. 1, (Nuclear Power [General]), Wellington City Archives.

<sup>206</sup> Letter from Beverly Morris to Sir Michael Fowler, 11<sup>th</sup> April 1983, Town Clerk's File, 0000:2140:60/4915 pt. 1, (Nuclear Power [General]), Wellington City Archives.

<sup>207</sup> Letter from J.C. Horne (Secretary of Environment and Conservation Organisations on New Zealand), 18<sup>th</sup> May 1982, Town Clerk's File, 0000:2140:60/4915 pt. 1, (Nuclear Power [General]), Wellington City Archives.

<sup>208</sup> Letter from Alistair S. Harray of Peace Action Tauranga, 4<sup>th</sup> May 1982, Town Clerk's File, 0000:2140:60/4915 pt. 1, (Nuclear Power [General]), Wellington City Archives.

<sup>209</sup> Telegraph from J. Herbert (President of Kapiti-Mana UNA), 16<sup>th</sup> April 1982, Town Clerk's File, 0000:2140:60/4915 pt. 1, (Nuclear Power [General]), Wellington City Archives.



peace groups: the National Council of Women (NCW), the Federation of Labour (FOL), the National Council of Churches (NCC) and the Catholic Commission for Evangelisation, Justice and Development. The letter concluded by referring to the use of symbolic gestures and why it was necessitated in this era.

As citizens of this modern world we have very little control over our destinies, so gestures become very important. This gesture makes an important point – we do not wish to be bombed, irradiated, mutated, nor have our city (and our children's city) destroyed, whether on purpose or by accident.<sup>210</sup>

The Anglican Pacifist Fellowship secretary, Margaret Mander, who was based in Upper Hutt, also extended her organisation's support for the declaration. It supported the Councils move in making a decision that was beyond its usual scope of local matters, such as potholes.<sup>211</sup>

That the Council received so many letters of support, did little to change the mind of Fowler. He responded to Suzanne Willis of the Wellington Polytechnic Students' Association, by stating the Council was not in the position to do anything about instituting the zone and felt people were justified in saying it was an exercise of futility.<sup>212</sup> The Town Clerk Ian McCutcheon also did little to encourage the move in his responses to letters of congratulations. He reiterated that the Council had no power over the matter and described it as symbolic gesture in a letter to Mrs Kouwenhoven.<sup>213</sup> He questioned the significance of Wellington's NWFZ when responding to a letter from Larry Ross who had written asking for details of the declaration.<sup>214</sup> Another response saw the Town Clerk telling the Waiheke Clerk that it had no control over ship visits and that such a responsibility was in the hands of perhaps the Wellington Harbour Board, but more likely in the hands of the Government.<sup>215</sup> The Mayor and Clerk were reluctant to support the NWFZ decision in correspondence and it also appeared that implementing the zone was going to be a point of contention.

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<sup>210</sup> Letter from Llewellyn Richards to Sir Michael Fowler and Councillors, 30<sup>th</sup> April 1982, Town Clerk's File, 0000:2140:60/4915 pt. 1, (Nuclear Power [General]), Wellington City Archives.

<sup>211</sup> Letter from Margaret Mander (Secretary of APF), 15<sup>th</sup> May 1982, Town Clerk's File, 0000:2140:60/4915 pt. 1, (Nuclear Power [General]), Wellington City Archives.

<sup>212</sup> Letter from Michael Fowler to Suzanne Willis, 29<sup>th</sup> April 1982, Town Clerk's File, 0000:2140:60/4915 pt. 1, (Nuclear Power [General]), Wellington City Archives.

<sup>213</sup> Letter from Ian McCutcheon to Mrs Kouwenhoven, 28<sup>th</sup> September 1982, Town Clerk's File, 0000:2140:60/4915 pt. 1, (Nuclear Power [General]), Wellington City Archives.

<sup>214</sup> Letter from Ian McCutcheon to Larry Ross, 8<sup>th</sup> December 1982, Town Clerk's File, 0000:2140:60/4915 pt. 1, (Nuclear Power [General]), Wellington City Archives.

<sup>215</sup> Letter from Ian McCutcheon to C.F. Garguilo, 5<sup>th</sup> April 1983, Town Clerk's File, 0000:2140:60/4915 pt. 1, (Nuclear Power [General]), Wellington City Archives.



Some were concerned that the Council leaders may back track on the declaration. The Tramway Union considered holding a stop work meeting in response to what the union saw as the Council reneging on its NWFZ decision. The Union had requested the use of the Wellington City Transport training room to show an anti-nuclear film in May 1982. The President of the Union, Mr Tolich said he believed showing the film was in line with the Council's stance. The General Manager of Wellington City Transport, Mr Fyfe, denied the request. The Union then approached the Labour Councillors to get the decision overturned. The request by the Tramways Union was not surprising, the unions of Wellington were strongly supportive of the anti-nuclear movement. This support would again be given as the visit of the USS Truxtun approached.

The visit of the USS Truxtun was referred to at the time of the Wellington declaration. It was highlighted as an example of the threat that faced the city. The response to the NWFZ made it clear that the zone would do nothing to prevent the visit of the Truxtun. The City Solicitor, Peter Rama, made it clear, perhaps tongue in cheek, that the council could not enforce the zone and the only possibility was for the Council to request that those coming ashore from a nuclear vessel be fumigated by passing a by-law.<sup>216</sup> An attempt to prevent the Truxtun visit was made by approaching the Wellington Harbour Board. On the 28<sup>th</sup> of April 1982, Board member, Keith Spry's motion to have the Harbour declared a NWFZ met the same fate of several previous unsuccessful attempts. Prior to the declaration Spry admitted that even if the move was successful, the Board lacked the power to prevent the Truxtun visiting Wellington.<sup>217</sup> The nuclear free zone would not stop the ship visit, but did provoke one MP to offer his region as an alternative port for the Truxtun. Marlborough MP, Doug Kidd stated that the ship and its crew would be welcome in Picton.<sup>218</sup> The offer was never accepted and the Truxtun continued as scheduled to arrive in Wellington on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May.

Following the declaration of the NWFZ, a *Dominion* editorial signposted the Truxtun visit as a time for likely civil disturbance and suggested that some people may have been encouraged by the Council decision.<sup>219</sup> The past visits of the Truxtun indicated that protest action was to be expected. The first visit in 1976 saw a small Peace Squadron take to the water

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<sup>216</sup> 'N-ship welcome in Picton', *Evening Standard*, 16<sup>th</sup> April 1982, p. 1.

<sup>217</sup> Keith Spry, in, Brian Woodley, 'Harbour board lacks power: Nuclear-free harbour zone won't stop Truxtun', *Evening Post*, 15<sup>th</sup> April 1982, p. 1.

<sup>218</sup> 'N-ship welcome in Picton', *Evening Standard*, 16<sup>th</sup> April 1982, p. 1.

<sup>219</sup> 'Nuclear free at a price', *Dominion*, 16<sup>th</sup> April 1982, p. 10.

which did little to stop the ship. In July 1976 the Campaign Against Nuclear Warships (CANWAR) was formed at a public meeting of 400 people.<sup>220</sup> However, it was the decision of the Wellington Harbour Employees Union to refuse assistance in berthing the ship that resulted in the Truxtun being forced to anchor in stream.<sup>221</sup> A second visit in 1980 saw further union action.<sup>222</sup> While action against the third visit of the Truxtun was inevitable, records of peace groups show that they were encouraged by the existence of the Wellington NWFZ. The day after the declaration, Wendy Walker, the spokesperson of CANWAR reported that it had revived after its previous opposition to the 1980 Truxtun visit. She believed the nuclear issue was no longer confined to a minority and that the Council decision would lead to more support for anti-nuclear groups.<sup>223</sup>

The revived CANWAR gained support of the New Zealand University Students Association (NZUSA) which alongside the support from the student association of Victoria University, became the key group in organising opposition to the Truxtun visit.<sup>224</sup> The group sent a letter asking for support for its planned activities. This letter referred to the NWFZ as an impetus for support. 'Wellington City Council has declared Wellington a nuclear free zone. Wellington people must endorse this strategy and oppose any threats to our zone of peace'.<sup>225</sup> The letter also outlined dates for set action. The 20<sup>th</sup> of May was the first public event, with a meeting at Wellington Girls College. In the lead up to the Truxtun's arrival, other activities were undertaken. The Labour Party distributed 40,000 leaflets throughout the Wellington region and posters were displayed around the City. On the day of the arrival a small Peace Squadron, consisting of approximately 25 vessels, took to the water but failed to get near the ship. However, seamen on a passing ferry did draw further attention to the protest with an anti-nuclear sign.<sup>226</sup> On land, white poppies signifying opposition were sold and stalls were set up. A demonstration was held on Thursday the 27<sup>th</sup> of May, the night before the Truxtun was due to leave, which included a march to the US Embassy.<sup>227</sup> Organisers later believed that if the

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<sup>220</sup> 'A Review of the Pacific in an Unstable World / Campaign Against Nuclear Warships in New Zealand', Wellington: CANWAR, 1977, p. 25.

<sup>221</sup> Newnham, p. 11.

<sup>222</sup> Wayne Hennessy, 'Truxtun Visit', *Evening Post*, 14<sup>th</sup> April 1982, p. 2.

<sup>223</sup> Wendy Walker, in, Brian Woodley, 'Harbour board lacks power: Nuclear-free harbour zone won't stop Truxtun', *Evening Post*, 15<sup>th</sup> April 1982, p. 1.

<sup>224</sup> Wayne Hennessy, 'Truxtun', *Peace Movement New Zealand Newsletter*, June 1982, p. 8.

<sup>225</sup> 'CANWAR letter from P. McDonald (CANWAR Co-ordinator), Peace Movement Aotearoa Records, 91-124-1, ATL.

<sup>226</sup> Wayne Hennessy, 'Truxtun', *Peace Movement New Zealand Newsletter*, June 1982, p. 8.

<sup>227</sup> CANWAR letter from P. McDonald (CANWAR Co-ordinator), Peace Movement Aotearoa Records, 91-124-1, ATL.

march had been held on Friday it would have drawn more than 2000 people. The alteration of the departure date from the 28<sup>th</sup> to the 29<sup>th</sup> was seen as a deliberate ploy to minimise protest. Wayne Hennessy, the Wellington representative of Peace Movement New Zealand, concluded his report by stating that it appeared that a broad based peace movement was gaining momentum.<sup>228</sup> Evidence of this was seen in June when a branch of the CND was formed in Wellington.<sup>229</sup>

The Wellington Nuclear Weapon Free Zone gained further attention in 1983. This began with the marking of the declarations anniversary. The day was marked by a gathering, which ironically included Mayor Michael Fowler. The former ombudsmen, Sir Guy Powles, who would later become the patron of the NZNFZC, addressed the Mayor and public. His speech was later published in the *New Zealand Monthly Review*. Powles acknowledged Fowlers opposition to the resolution and thanked him for his attendance. He also addressed Fowlers previous statements of the zone being 'stupendous nonsense' in his speech, although it may have been unwittingly.

A lot of people think these declaration of nuclear weapon free zones – and there are many of them in this world – are nonsense. Nothing could be further from the truth. From little acorns great oaks grow – and from this growing number of little acorns throughout the world will grow the great oaks of nuclear disarmament.<sup>230</sup>

The speech concluded with the presentation of gifts of flowers, fruit and food to the Mayor as tokens of peace. The NWFZ continued to be a motivating factor in further peace activities in 1983.

Following the example of Christchurch, it was decided that a Peace Festival would be held in Wellington. A committee was formed to organise the festival following the visit of Dr Helen Caldicott.<sup>231</sup> The festival was held on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of September 1983 and included a fair and concert on the 24<sup>th</sup>. This was followed by churches being requested to highlight the theme of peace on Sunday the 25<sup>th</sup> and the festival concluded with a gathering.<sup>232</sup> Rev John

<sup>228</sup> Wayne Hennessy, 'Truxtun', *Peace Movement New Zealand Newsletter*, June 1982, p. 9.

<sup>229</sup> 'History and Aims of CND (Wgtn)', Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament Records, 91-013-1/10, ATL.

<sup>230</sup> Guy Powles, 'NWFZ – A Great Peace Movement', *New Zealand Monthly Review*, August 1983, p. 2.

<sup>231</sup> Wellington Peace Festival letter to organisations, 8<sup>th</sup> June 1983, Town Clerk's File, 0000:2140:60/4915 pt. 1, (Nuclear Power [General]), Wellington City Archives.

<sup>232</sup> Wellington Peace Festival letter to organisations, 8<sup>th</sup> June 1983, Town Clerk's File, 0000:2140:60/4915 pt. 1, (Nuclear Power [General]), Wellington City Archives.

Murray of St Andrew's Church was a strong supporter of the festival. His Church had its own peace group in operation.<sup>233</sup> Not unexpectedly, support for the festival was not universal. The Mayor was invited due to the Council's nuclear free position, but he declined the offer to participate, citing time commitments.<sup>234</sup> Similarly, a Women's Disarmament Exhibition held from October 9<sup>th</sup> to November the 20<sup>th</sup> the previous year had also failed to gain official Council support. The request from the organisers for banners to be placed on Council buildings was declined due to the group needing personal liability insurance.<sup>235</sup> The exhibition was prompted by the Councils NWFZ and the growing women's disarmament movement. The promotional leaflet outlined the motivation behind the multi media festival. 'The festival has been prompted by the fact that Wellington City has been declared a nuclear-free zone, and by growing awareness among New Zealand women of the links between nuclear technology and practice and women's oppression in a male dominated society.'<sup>236</sup> While the Council did little to implement the nuclear free zone by supporting peace ventures, it again faced a challenge over its position when the USS Texas visited Wellington.

The peace movement nationally was a great deal stronger when the USS Texas came to New Zealand in August 1983, following the development of organisations throughout the country during 1983. The timing of the visit could have further invigorated the anti-nuclear groups. Maire Leadbetter, of the Auckland CND, stated that 'the USS Texas had the temerity to visit New Zealand at the time of Hiroshima Day commemorations (a traditional time for peace activities) ...'<sup>237</sup> All was set for the Texas visit to be a time for the peace movement to show its strength. The Wellington Peace Squadron reformed to challenge the visit of the Texas on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August.<sup>238</sup> A part of their activity was sending a telegram informing the ship of their opposition.

Citizens of Wellington have declared their city a nuclear weapon-free zone. In view of your policy neither to confirm nor deny presence of nuclear weapons on board we have no alternative but to assume you are loaded to full nuclear capability and strongly oppose the visit of your ship. Wellington Peace Squadron will present a peaceful but

<sup>233</sup> St Andrew's Peace Group: Records, 91-119-3, ATL.

<sup>234</sup> Letter from Michael Fowler to Rodney Murphy, 14<sup>th</sup> June 1983, Town Clerk's File, 0000:2140:60/4915 pt. 1, (Nuclear Power [General]), Wellington City Archives.

<sup>235</sup> The Women's Gallery (Wellington), 84-72-6/3, ATL.

<sup>236</sup> Promotional leaflet, The Women's Gallery (Wellington), 84-72-6/2, ATL.

<sup>237</sup> Leadbetter, p. 5.

<sup>238</sup> Wellington Peace Squadron: Papers, 91-042, ATL.

determined resistance to your entry. Should you decide to force your way, we hold you responsible for the consequences.<sup>239</sup>

The pleas were denied and the Texas arrived to disagreement among the City Councillors. The Councillors received an invitation to visit the nuclear powered ship. Cr Frank O'Flynn called on Councillors to decline the invitation due to city's NWFZ. The Mayor responded to this request by reinforcing an earlier statement that he would visit the ship,<sup>240</sup> unlike his Auckland counterpart, Colin Kay, who said he would not visit the Texas, but if its officers visited him he would express opposition to nuclear weapons on behalf of the city.<sup>241</sup> Undeterred, Michael Fowler spent two hours aboard the Texas.<sup>242</sup>

Cr Helene Ritchie was active in the lead up to the Texas visit. She joined Labour Party MPs, Fran Wilde and Sonja Davies in selling white poppies for peace on Hiroshima Day.<sup>243</sup> She also joined peace researcher Owen Wilkes as a speaker at Civic Square on Hiroshima Day.<sup>244</sup> Ritchie spoke of the insult of the visit to a NWFZ city at a Texas protest held on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August, where she was introduced as the Council spokesperson.<sup>245</sup> This turned into a matter of debate at the Council meeting that night. Cr Campbell queried why Ritchie was announced to the crowd as 'speaking for the Wellington City Council'.<sup>246</sup> Campbell asked Ritchie if she had authorised the introduction and if not, had she corrected it. Ritchie responded that she spoke with pleasure about the issue which was in line with the Council's policy and that she had not heard how she was announced. Michael Fowler added that being a spokesperson of the Council was not a right of a Councillor and that they should not be introduced in that manner.<sup>247</sup> The differing opinions of Ritchie and other Councillors were overshadowed by the vast protest activity surrounding the visit. Barney Richards of the New Zealand branch of the World Council for Peace recalled taking part in a 3 day and night vigil during the Texas' presence in Wellington.<sup>248</sup> This was part of the protest activity which made Nicky Hager, prominent peace

<sup>239</sup> Les Church (Peace Squadron spokesperson) Media release of telegram to USS Texas, Wellington Peace Squadron: Papers, 91-042, ATL.

<sup>240</sup> 'Councillors urged not to visit ship', *Evening Post*, 6<sup>th</sup> August 1983, p. 4.

<sup>241</sup> 'Councillors urged not to visit ship', *Evening Post*, 6<sup>th</sup> August 1983, p. 4.

<sup>242</sup> 'Back from Texas lunch', *Dominion*, 12<sup>th</sup> August 1983, p. 5.

<sup>243</sup> *New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee Newsletter*, December 1983 / January 1984, p. 1.

<sup>244</sup> *New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee Newsletter*, August / September 1983, p. 11.

<sup>245</sup> 'Ritchie Protest Speech Queried', *Dominion*, 11<sup>th</sup> August 1983, p. 9.

<sup>246</sup> Wellington City Council Meeting Minutes, 10<sup>th</sup> August 1983, Town Clerk's File, 0000:2140:60/4915 pt. 1, (Nuclear Power [General]), Wellington City Archives.

<sup>247</sup> Wellington City Council Meeting Minutes, 10<sup>th</sup> August 1983, Town Clerk's File, 0000:2140:60/4915 pt. 1, (Nuclear Power [General]), Wellington City Archives.

<sup>248</sup> Barney Richards, Interview with author, 29<sup>th</sup> June 2004.



worker, realise that they had made it in terms of gaining public support. Hager did, however, wonder if the opposition would translate to the visit of the British vessel, the *Invincible*.<sup>249</sup>

The HMS *Invincible* entered not only a Wellington city NWFZ on the 25<sup>th</sup> of November 1983, but also a Nuclear Free harbour. Forty eight hours prior to the ship's arrival into Wellington, the Harbour Board passed a motion making it the first port to be a NWFZ.<sup>250</sup> The third attempt to have the harbour declared was led by Hazel Bibby, who had been involved in the earlier Wellington City declaration. Bibby called on the board to endorse the United Nations 1978 resolution on establishing NWFZs. She believed it would be a strong symbolic statement that would show the Government the peoples' opposition to nuclear weapons.<sup>251</sup> The motion was seconded by Grahame Anderson who believed the debate was appropriate since the board represented people who could be victims of nuclear war.<sup>252</sup> The motion also received speeches of support from Board members Keith Spry and Ted Woolf. However, Jim Stewart believed the board meeting should not be a political forum as its role was to see that the port was run efficiently. Brian Barraclough also rejected the motion saying it would be ineffective.<sup>253</sup> Following an hour of debate a vote was taken, seeing the motion passed ten votes to six. The result was applauded by a packed gallery full of white poppy wearing anti-nuclear supporters. The move is likely to have been a result of changes in Board members. The statement of Ted Woolf also indicated that it was due to the will of the people and the feedback he had received over the Wellington NWFZ.<sup>254</sup> The new harbour zone, just like the Wellington city zone the year before, could do little to prevent the *Invincible*'s visit which arrived to ongoing anti-nuclear protest. The Peace Squadron once again took to the water and a march was held from Civic Square to Parliament to protest the visit.<sup>255</sup>

The *Invincible* was the last ship to challenge the regions NWFZs prior to the change in Government. Yet unlike the majority of NWFZs, the Wellington stand was not forgotten. The declaration was marked by a controversial sign at the Wellington airport welcoming people to Wellington, 'A Nuclear Free City' which took years of negotiation to erect in 1988. The sign was removed after public debate in 2003 and 2004 and has been replaced by a plaque at the Peace

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<sup>249</sup> Nicky Hager, Interview with author, 28<sup>th</sup> June 2004.

<sup>250</sup> 'Harbour a nuclear free zone – official', *Evening Post*, 24<sup>th</sup> November 1983, p. 18.

<sup>251</sup> Hazel Bibby, 'Harbour a nuclear free zone – official', *Evening Post*, 24<sup>th</sup> November 1983, p. 18.

<sup>252</sup> Grahame Anderson, 'Harbour a nuclear free zone – official', *Evening Post*, 24<sup>th</sup> November 1983, p. 18.

<sup>253</sup> 'Harbour a nuclear free zone – official', *Evening Post*, 24<sup>th</sup> November 1983, p. 18.

<sup>254</sup> 'Harbour a nuclear free zone – official', *Evening Post*, 24<sup>th</sup> November 1983, p. 18.

<sup>255</sup> 'Action over carrier', *Evening Post*, 24<sup>th</sup> November 1983, p. 3.



Garden in the Botanical Gardens. Mayor Kerry Prendergast unveiled the monument which recognised the efforts of Wellingtonians who made the city nuclear free and their efforts for peace. The unveiling at Hiroshima Day celebrations in 2004 was met by two vocal opponents who saw the destruction of the airport sign as destroying a part of Wellington's heritage and as mark of the capitalist agenda of the Wellington City Council. The sign issue did lead to renewed accounts of how the Wellington NWFZ developed, some even claimed incorrectly that Wellington was the first nuclear free city in New Zealand.<sup>256</sup>

The Wellington NWFZ was not the first city declaration but it was significant. The zone resulted from relatively minimal public lobbying, but instead came about through the efforts of a Labour caucus lead by Helene Ritchie. The zone led to comprehensive media coverage due to the reaction of the Mayor and his subsequent resignation. Ongoing ship visits also kept the zone in the public mind. The zone encouraged some peace activity, including the Disarmament Exhibition and Peace Festival. The nuclear free status of Wellington also added legitimacy to ongoing opposition to ship visits, which remained the main rallying point for the peace movement. Yet, the ship visits also confirmed what many believed, that the zones were ineffectual in actually maintaining any form of a nuclear free area. The power remained firmly in the hands of the Central Government, however, the cumulative effect of NWFZs is believed by some to have impacted on the eventual Nuclear Free New Zealand policy. Wellington's role in this was as a guide for other centres. Kate Dewes says that the larger cities helped encourage others. 'And it was an achievable thing once you started getting Christchurch and Wellington nuclear free, they were big cities, that empowered people and then those little boroughs, it wasn't too hard ...'<sup>257</sup> Helene Ritchie also believed that the zone was crucial in influencing New Zealand as the capital city. She also believed that the decision is historic due to the process. Such a move, she believed would not have occurred since the restructuring of local Government in 1989 which she believed limits political discussions. The Wellington nuclear weapon free zone continues to be a move that she is proud of being a part of.<sup>258</sup>

<sup>256</sup> Kerry Prendergast, 'Keeping the peace', *Dominion Post*, 9<sup>th</sup> October 2003, p. B7.

<sup>257</sup> Kate Dewes, Interview with author, 7<sup>th</sup> May 2004.

<sup>258</sup> Helene Ritchie, Interview with author, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2004.

## PALMERSTON NORTH

The Palmerston North case is one that follows more closely what has been depicted as a 'typical' example of how local Government NWFZs developed, where a Council made a declaration after an extended public campaign. Palmerston North is a provincial city that is the home to Massey University. It had a peace group presence prior to the 1980s following earlier moments of organisation. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament formed a group in the late 1960s and the New Zealand Christian Pacifist Society also had a small group in the city during the 1960s. By the beginning of the 1980s there was no active peace group in the city, the main form of activism was focused on the Springbok Tour in 1981.<sup>259</sup>

The nuclear issue did not gain significant attention in Palmerston North until April 1982. During that month Larry Ross was undertaking a national tour. One of his destinations was Palmerston North, where on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April he spoke at the Massey University Campus to students and staff, and also to a gathering at the Rangitane Pavilion in the city. The lecture tour was advertised in the local paper the *Evening Standard*, with the headline of 'Better to be Active Today than Radioactive Tomorrow'.<sup>260</sup> This sentiment of threat and related action would be a core concept in the efforts to make Palmerston North a nuclear weapon free zone. The Ross meeting at the Rangitane Pavilion, was attended by more than 70 people and resulted in the introduction of the NWFZ goal for the city. Two resolutions were passed unopposed, the first was that the Palmerston North City Council would be asked to declare the city a nuclear weapon free zone. The second expanded on this and sought to get the Council to call upon the central Government to declare New Zealand a NWFZ as an act of recognition of the Council's concern for its citizens. The meeting received front page coverage, however, the Deputy Mayor Gordon Kear refused to comment on a stance until the issue was put before the Council formally.<sup>261</sup>

The visit gained considerable media coverage. Ross was the focus of a Saturday newspaper feature article where he expanded upon his campaign to have New Zealand become a nuclear free nation with positive neutrality. He was also questioned on the symbolic gestures of Council declarations where he stated that, 'A City Council which takes that step has

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<sup>259</sup> Geoff Kaandorp, 'The 1981 Springbok Tour and the Anti-Apartheid Movement in Palmerston North', BA (hons), Massey University, 2000.

<sup>260</sup> *Evening Standard*, 19<sup>th</sup> April 1982, p. 31.

<sup>261</sup> 'Peacenik seeks nuclear-free city', *Evening Standard*, 21<sup>st</sup> April 1982, p. 1.

done a very significant act. It puts itself and its people on record as being against the deployment and use of nuclear weapons in its area.<sup>262</sup> Ross also contributed to the Massey University student paper *Chaff* where he wrote about South Pacific and New Zealand nuclear free zones, but did not refer specifically to local Government NWFZs.<sup>263</sup> The nuclear issue was thrust into the public arena with further articles on local NWFZs in the week leading up to the Council meeting. The lead article in the *Evening Standard* on April the 16<sup>th</sup> was on the NWFZ declaration of the Wellington City Council, which also reported on Fowler's opposition to the zone.<sup>264</sup> The day following the coverage on the Ross meeting saw another article graced the front page addressing the nuclear issue. This arose out of discussion at the Municipal Association conference in Auckland which saw the jurisdiction of local Government over local zones debated and ultimately labelled as 'silly' by Mr M. Joel of Dunedin. Invercargill deputy Mayor R. Deaker disagreed, stating it was up to everyone to get involved in facing the nuclear threat.<sup>265</sup> The same issue also featured the first letter to the editor in support of the zones. Jocelyn Paprill, a student, who became a frequent writer and organiser in the Massey University No Nukes Committee, wrote about the need for more zones in order to prove to Muldoon that concern about nuclear war was increasing.<sup>266</sup> She also contributed to Peace Movement New Zealand newsletters as the group's correspondent until she completed University at the end of 1982.<sup>267</sup>

The media coverage of the nuclear free zone debate was important in getting the issue into the public eye, however, it would take a more concerted approach before the Council would declare the city nuclear free. This would be lead by a new peace group which was established as a result of the Ross talk. At the meeting 48 people volunteered to help form a local committee and on May 24<sup>th</sup> the Palmerston North People for Peace group was formed.<sup>268</sup> It contained a working committee of ten, including Chairman Murray Reed and Secretary Greg Christensen. The entire group consisted of approximately 40 members.<sup>269</sup>

<sup>262</sup> 'Fighting for a Nuke-free NZ', *Evening Standard*, 24<sup>th</sup> April 1982, p. 9.

<sup>263</sup> Larry Ross, 'No Nukes is Good Nukes', *Chaff*, Vol. 49, No. 8, 28<sup>th</sup> April 1982, p. 3.

<sup>264</sup> 'N-Ship Welcome in Picton', *Evening Standard*, 16<sup>th</sup> April 1982, p. 1.

<sup>265</sup> 'Councils being 'silly' over nukes', *Evening Standard*, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1982, p. 1.

<sup>266</sup> Jocelyn Paprill, 'Letters', *Evening Standard*, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1982, p. 2.

<sup>267</sup> Letter to Peace Co-Ordinators from Jocelyn Paprill, 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1982, Peace Movement Aotearoa Records, 91-124-1.

<sup>268</sup> 'Peacenik seeks nuclear-free city', *Evening Standard*, 21<sup>st</sup> April 1982, p. 1.

<sup>269</sup> 'Anti- nuke Move', *Evening Standard*, 28<sup>th</sup> May 1982, p. 14.

The group's first action was to approach the City Council. The Palmerston North City Council received a letter from Christensen on June 1<sup>st</sup> with the group's resolution:

The Palmerston North People for Peace Committee calls on the Palmerston North City Council to demonstrate its concern for the welfare of the citizens of Palmerston North by declaring Palmerston North a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone and in demonstrating its concern, call on the N.Z. Government to follow their lead and declare New Zealand a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone.<sup>270</sup>

The sending of the letter was followed up by a meeting of the Palmerston North People for Peace Committee meeting to be held on June 28<sup>th</sup> at the Trade Union Centre. The gathering focused on the issue of Palmerston North becoming nuclear free.<sup>271</sup> The same night, the City Council addressed the issue for the first time. Mayor, Brian Elwood, reacted to the group's letter by outlining possible courses of action, while making it clear that the Council had no legal jurisdiction over nuclear concerns.<sup>272</sup> He personally believed a declaration would be impractical. Cr Robyn Leeming also spoke against the proposal, stating that Councillors were not elected to decide upon such issues. Three Councillors supported the proposed NWFZ declaration, Aline Pengelly, Pat Kehiller and John Boldt. These Councillors were not involved in peace organisations but became vocal supporters of a NWFZ. Cr Pat Kehiller addressed the concern over jurisdiction, conceding that while the Council may not have a legal right, it had a moral right to make such a decision. Cr John Boldt was even more outspoken in defence of the Palmerston North People for Peace request. He pointed to the responsibility of the Council over matters of Civil Defence, and pointed to the risk that nuclear ships posed. Like Kehiller, he also called on moral arguments. 'My conscience says we should do it (declare the city a nuclear weapon free zone) and let the Government know.'<sup>273</sup> His speech received applause from the public gallery as he vowed to raise the issue again in future months. However, his untimely death meant that this did not occur.

Despite the arguments put forward the proposal was rejected. Instead the Council opted to note the resolution of the Palmerston North People for Peace and for the Council to 'express abhorrence of nuclear and other weapons of war and calls on all nations with nuclear capacity to begin a process of multilateral reductions in nuclear armaments until there is

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<sup>270</sup> Letter to Mayor Elwood from Greg Christensen, (N.D – filing shows it was received on the 1/6/82), Palmerston North City Council (PNCC) Series 1/5/5 8/57 Part 1, Ian Matheson City Archives.

<sup>271</sup> *Evening Standard*, 26<sup>th</sup> June 1982, p. 30.

<sup>272</sup> Minutes from Council Meeting 28/6/82, PNCC Series 1/5/5 8/57 Part 1, Ian Matheson City Archives.

<sup>273</sup> 'Nuke-free zone for city rejected', *Evening Standard*, 29<sup>th</sup> June 1982, p. 23.

international outlawing of nuclear weaponry.<sup>274</sup> The Chairman of Palmerston North People for Peace, Murray Reed, expressed disappointment at the failed attempt. He commended the Council for discussing the issue but felt the resolution the Council passed was of 'little practical value'.<sup>275</sup> He believed that sustained pressure on politicians was the only way that people could force contemplation of nuclear disarmament and that the Council resolution would not achieve that.

The issue briefly featured in the letters to the editor pages of the *Evening Standard*. Cr Aline Pengelly echoed Reeds criticism of the weakened Council resolution. She also disputed suggestions that the Council should not discuss the issue due to its lack of jurisdiction.

The argument that Council has "no mandate" to debate the issue did not prevent the vexed question of the Springbok tour being debated in the chamber. We did rightly then, and would do rightly now to join our voice to all Councils and groups who demonstrate a common concern for our country by speaking out against nuclear warfare.<sup>276</sup>

P.R.J. Hockey also wrote in support of the proposed declaration.<sup>277</sup> However, not all were so supportive. L. Geo King, a long time letter writer, wrote criticising Councillors for wasting time and money by debating the issue. He pointed to war veterans who knew that it took more than words to defend the nation. King also joked about other possible resolutions for Aline Pengelly to consider.

If the evils of society can be cured by playing around with toothless resolutions, Cr Pengelly should give some thought to the following worthwhile ideas. – Make Palmerston North a "free from huge rate increases city", a "free from rape city", a "free from crime city", and, most important, a "free from housing shortages city".<sup>278</sup>

While the debate continued in the pages of the *Evening Standard* the Mayor set about acting upon the resolution. The Mayor wrote to world leaders in both June 1982 and 1983. The list included those that lead nuclear capable nations. The Presidents of the United States of America, France and Russia along with the Prime Minister of Great Britain were all sent letters

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<sup>274</sup> Minutes from Council Meeting 28/6/82, PNCC Series 1/5/5 8/57 Part 1, Ian Matheson City Archives.

<sup>275</sup> 'Nuke-free zone for city rejected', *Evening Standard*, 29<sup>th</sup> June 1982, p. 23.

<sup>276</sup> 'Nuclear Stand admired', *Evening Standard*, 8<sup>th</sup> July 1982, p. 2.

<sup>277</sup> 'End Buck Passing', *Evening Standard*, 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1982, p. 2.

<sup>278</sup> 'More than talk required', *Evening Standard*, 14<sup>th</sup> July 1982, p. 2.



informing them of the resolution passed by the Council.<sup>279</sup> The other nuclear superpower, China, was not contacted. The letters resulted in one response from the US embassy, that claimed that the Reagan Government was committed to a reduction in nuclear arms.<sup>280</sup>

The debate surrounding the failed declaration may have been based upon the lack of Council jurisdiction, however, Freda Larsen, a long standing member of Palmerston North Peace groups and a Quaker, believed the reason it was rejected was due to a concentration of Trade Unionists in the Palmerston North People for Peace group who would be representing a particular political perspective. She also believed that if the city was to be declared nuclear weapon free, it would need the involvement of local 'notables'.<sup>281</sup>

After the initial push the peace movement in Palmerston North appeared to lose momentum. A letter from PMNZ fieldworker Sonja Antonsen who visited Palmerston North in September 1982 reported that the People for Peace Group still appeared to be trying to set itself up, while the Massey University group was active.<sup>282</sup> Hiroshima Day was a rare time for the People for Peace group to gain some publicity by advertising a Public Rally in the Square. However, the Massey University No Nukes Committee appeared alone as it organised a nuclear awareness week around Hiroshima Day and it hoped that in 1983 there would be a general peace group active in Palmerston North.<sup>283</sup>

April 1983 saw a resurgence in peace activity not only in Palmerston North, but throughout the country. The world renowned nuclear disarmament campaigner, Dr Helen Caldicott and her husband Bill, toured the country, sponsored by the New Zealand Foundation for Peace Studies. The Australian born Caldicott was the founder of Physicians for Social Responsibility and Women's Action for Nuclear Disarmament. She was the author of *Nuclear Madness – What Can You Do* and the force behind the film *If you Love this Planet*.<sup>284</sup> Her style was one of presenting her message as a Doctor concerned with the medical effects of nuclear war and also as a mother, who was concerned with the future of her children. Her stark

<sup>279</sup> Letter to Graham Woolford from Brian Elwood, 20<sup>th</sup> June 1983, PNCC Series 1/5/5 8/57 Part 1, Ian Matheson City Archives.

<sup>280</sup> Letter to Brian Elwood from Charles L. Bell, 8<sup>th</sup> July 1983, PNCC Series 1/5/5 8/57 Part 1, Ian Matheson City Archives.

<sup>281</sup> Freda Larsen, Interview with the author, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2004.

<sup>282</sup> Letter from Sonja Antonsen to Michael Delaney, 6<sup>th</sup> October 1982, Peace Movement Aotearoa Records, 91-124-1, ATL.

<sup>283</sup> *Peace Movement New Zealand Newsletter*, September 1982, p. 8.

<sup>284</sup> <http://www.helencaldicott.com/about.htm>, 19<sup>th</sup> October 2003.



statements questioning why mothers bother to clean their children's teeth when they could be killed by nuclear war, spurred many across the country into action.<sup>285</sup> She also spoke encouragingly about people's effectiveness in politics. The Caldicott tour had a catalysing effect in Palmerston North.

Caldicott spoke at the Palmerston North City Council Chamber on the evening of April 7<sup>th</sup> 1983.<sup>286</sup> It was reported that 400 people attended the meeting, many of whom had to sit on the floor. They listened to what was described by *Chaff* as an 'emotionally shocking' address on the possibility of nuclear war destroying all life within an hour.<sup>287</sup> The visit saw a revival of opposition to nuclear weapons expressed in the *Evening Standard*. The following two weeks saw four letters to the editor which wrote about the nuclear threat and the impact of the Caldicott speech. Not all were in support as one cynically described the emotiveness of her approach. 'The bleeding heart of Dr Helen Caldicott is gushing over New Zealand, each splash depicting a spectacular, horrifying bodily disfigurement consequent upon the not necessarily too proximate detonation of the nadir of civilization's technical wizardry: The nuclear device.'<sup>288</sup> In following weeks there was a renewed level of activity amongst Massey University students in a group called Massey Students for a Nuclear Free Pacific which wrote articles for *Chaff* and held several meetings.<sup>289</sup> The visit also stimulated the emergence of a new group. According to member and Massey lecturer, Paul Austin, the Manawatu Peace Movement was formed just prior to the visit.<sup>290</sup> Dr John Campbell-MacDonald, later a leading figure in the local movement, remembered the impact of the tour. He was a Cardiologist who had moved to New Zealand from England in 1976. Having participated in the CND Aldermaston Marches as a medical student, he became involved as the Manawatu representative of IPPNW and also as a key member of the Manawatu Peace Movement. Campbell-MacDonald believed the Caldicott meeting catalysed the peace movement.<sup>291</sup> Her example as a physician would see him feature in subsequent public presentations.

The Manawatu Peace Movement (MPM) was set up with a series of objectives: to inform and educate the public on peace issues; to provide a forum for discussion; to provide a

<sup>285</sup> Larry Ross, 'Brief History of the New Zealand Nuclear-Free Zone Campaign', Kate Dewes Personal Collection, p. 3.

<sup>286</sup> 'Medical Consequences of Nuclear War', *Chaff*, Vol. 50, No. 5, 30<sup>th</sup> March 1983, p. 14.

<sup>287</sup> 'Helen Caldicott: Medical & Ecological Effects of Nuclear War', *Chaff*, Vol. 50, No. 6, 13<sup>th</sup> April 1983, p. 5.

<sup>288</sup> 'Attack the real problem', *Evening Standard*, 14<sup>th</sup> April 1983, p. 2.

<sup>289</sup> 'Nuclear Free', *Chaff*, Vol. 50, No. 9, 4<sup>th</sup> May 1983, p. 5.

<sup>290</sup> 'Defence? Oh, Only Conventional, Please', *Chaff*, Vol. 50, No. 14, 6<sup>th</sup> July 1983, p. 12.

<sup>291</sup> Dr John Campbell-MacDonald, Interview with the author, 26<sup>th</sup> June 2004.

means for setting up action groups for specific projects; to provide information and resources for other peace groups and to help co-ordinate peace campaigns in the Manawatu.<sup>292</sup> This meant that the MPM did not result in any splintering from other peace groups.<sup>293</sup> The principal goal of the group was to see Palmerston North declared a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone. The MPM also outlined how they were going to achieve this objective and the benefits of doing so, while reflecting on the past failure to have the Council agree.

This symbolic move should have considerable political clout and it should also provide us with many opportunities to inform and educate. To achieve a NWFZ we must persuade City Councillors to vote for it. This was tried, unsuccessfully, last year. This time we must build a careful campaign to ensure we're successful.<sup>294</sup>

The group planned to gain momentum leading up to Hiroshima Day through publicity and petitioning, after which the Council would be requested to declare the city nuclear free. MPM also had in place a contingency plan if they could not get the declaration during either August or September. The organisation would have then sought to have the NWFZ declaration as an election issue in the lead up to local body elections to be held on October 8<sup>th</sup>.<sup>295</sup>

The MPM was more considered than the Palmerston North People for Peace group in its approach to Council. It set up working groups to deal with various components of the campaign, including groups who worked on Hiroshima Day activities and an education group who worked on creating a list of speakers for the general public, alongside one to be distributed to schools. Another group was in charge of publicity and organised posters, advertisements and press releases. The final group was concerned with the future directions of the MPM, developing aims and objectives and the next step if the declaration attempt were to be successful or otherwise.<sup>296</sup> The working groups and others would unite for a monthly group meeting on the third Wednesday of every month held at the Society of Friends Meeting Hall.<sup>297</sup>

The MPM hoped to gain publicity through a leaflet. It outlined the threat of a nuclear holocaust which could occur accidentally due to computer failure, and urged people to become

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<sup>292</sup> 'Peace Movement Against Nuclear Violence', *Chaff*, Vol. 50, No. 10, 1<sup>st</sup> June 1983, p. 11.

<sup>293</sup> Dr John Campbell-MacDonald, Interview with the author, 26<sup>th</sup> June 2004.

<sup>294</sup> 'Peace Movement Against Nuclear Violence', *Chaff*, Vol. 50, No. 10, 1<sup>st</sup> June 1983, p. 11.

<sup>295</sup> 'Peace Movement Against Nuclear Violence', *Chaff*, Vol. 50, No. 10, 1<sup>st</sup> June 1983, p. 11.

<sup>296</sup> Manawatu Peace Movement, Newsletter No. 2, 1<sup>st</sup> July 1983, Dr John Campbell-MacDonald Personal Collection.

<sup>297</sup> Manawatu Peace Movement, Newsletter No. 2, 1<sup>st</sup> July 1983, Dr John Campbell-MacDonald Personal Collection.

involved in the group by working for peace or giving donations.<sup>298</sup> The organisation received coverage in *Chaff*, Paul Austin, a member, was interviewed. In the interview he spoke about the NWFZ goal and outlined the group's acceptance that such a zone would have no practical significance.

We want the City Council of Palmerston North to declare the city a NWFZ. We don't think this has any practical significance and of course there are no teeth in such a declaration. The PNCC has no capacity to make sure P.N. remains such ... The major point of declaration is a political point. We want to say to the Government that here is a majority of people in the city who are opposed to being defended by nuclear weapons, as a matter of principle. Nuclear Weapons as a defence strategy is complete nonsense.<sup>299</sup>

The group continued to publicise its meetings in *Chaff* and in the *Evening Standard*. This included an educational meeting held at the Council Chambers on July 11<sup>th</sup>, which included five speakers. Dr John Campbell-MacDonald spoke on the medical and social effects of nuclear war, Massey University History Lecturer, Dalton West spoke on Modern Weaponry, Emele Duituturaga gave a Pacific perspective, Paul Green outlined the current international political situation and Maureen Bird (who became a mayoral candidate in the same year) spoke on the associated moral issues.<sup>300</sup>

MPM was involved in a wide range of activities in the lead up to Hiroshima Day to gain public support. Representatives approached churches to garner support and gained a sympathetic response from the Methodists, Presbyterians and Catholics. However, the churches did not appear to become particularly visible supporters. The group also launched a petition to have Palmerston North declared Nuclear Weapon Free. The MPM reported that the majority of those approached were willing to sign, and 5,590 signatures were collected before the petition was submitted to the Council. In order to financially support the activities and advertising costs the group relied on donations from individuals, but it also received 100 dollars from the Manawatu Trades Council. MPM also held a stall in the city which doubled as a fundraiser and educational tool. They collected over a thousand dollars from collections in the

<sup>298</sup> Manawatu Peace Movement leaflet, Dr John Campbell-MacDonald Personal Collection.

<sup>299</sup> Paul Austin, in, 'Defence? Oh, Only Conventional, Please', *Chaff*, Vol. 50, No. 14, 6<sup>th</sup> July 1983, p. 12.

<sup>300</sup> Manawatu Peace Movement, Newsletter No. 2, 1<sup>st</sup> July 1983, Dr John Campbell-MacDonald Personal Collection.

Square.<sup>301</sup> The activities undoubtedly gained a significant public profile, which would assist in a last attempt to show the Council the level of support with Hiroshima Day activities.

Hiroshima Day has been a rallying point for peace groups since 1947. The day is one where people gather to commemorate the loss of lives in the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and also make attempts to foster nuclear disarmament. August 6<sup>th</sup> 1983 in Palmerston North was no different in its reflection on the past, while simultaneously making current political demands. The event was advertised in both the *Chaff*<sup>302</sup> and *Evening Standard*<sup>303</sup> which urged people to come to the city Square and help make Palmerston North a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone. Interest in Hiroshima Day in 1983 was heightened not only due to the nation wide increase in peace activities, but also from the visit of the ship USS Texas which arrived on August 2<sup>nd</sup> amid renewed debates over the National Government's nuclear ship policy.<sup>304</sup>

The MPM also worked to build on public interest in the nuclear arms debate by providing two articles for the local paper. The first featured information about Earl Mountbatten who was a renowned critic of nuclear weapons. It cited one of the most famous anti-nuclear quotes: 'The world now stands on the brink of the final abyss. Let us all resolve to take all possible practical steps to ensure that we do not, through our own folly, go over the edge.'<sup>305</sup> The article concluded by stating that the NWFZ declarations by cities were a 'practical step'.<sup>306</sup> The second article also pointed to the increasing nuclear threat due to the arms race and how New Zealand could work for peace. Like the previous article, there were references to the increasing number of local Government NWFZs and stated that Palmerston North was one of the few main cities not to have done so.<sup>307</sup> Media coverage of peace activities continued in the lead up to the main event, a dance/drama presentation in protest to nuclear arms called 'Night on Bald Mountain' which involved 30 members of the community was performed on August 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> at the Teachers College Auditorium. The group had a photo of its final rehearsal printed

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<sup>301</sup> Manawatu Peace Movement, Newsletter No. 2, 1<sup>st</sup> July 1983, Dr John Campbell-MacDonald Personal Collection.

<sup>302</sup> *Chaff*, Vol. 50, No. 18, 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1983, pp. 12 -13.

<sup>303</sup> *Evening Standard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1983, p. 29; 4<sup>th</sup> August 1983, p. 5.

<sup>304</sup> 'N-Ship visits our choice, says Waring', *Evening Standard*, 1<sup>st</sup> August 1983, p. 1.


<sup>305</sup> Earl Mountbatten, in, 'Nuclear war's not science fiction – Earl', *Evening Standard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1983, p. 2.

<sup>306</sup> 'Nuclear war's not science fiction – Earl', *Evening Standard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1983, p. 2.

<sup>307</sup> 'Nuclear Arms build-up imperils world', *Evening Standard*, 4<sup>th</sup> August 1983, p. 2.

in the *Evening Standard*.<sup>308</sup> All of the media attention and growing public profile culminated in the Hiroshima Day Rally.

**MANAWATU  
PEACE MOVEMENT**



# HIROSHIMA DAY PEACE RALLY

**WHEN:**  
On Saturday, August 6, from 10.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.

**WHY:**  
To remember the devastation caused by the bombing of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945.  
To persuade our City Council to declare Palmerston North a Nuclear Weapons free zone.


**WHAT YOU CAN DO:**  
Come with your families, friends, neighbours and workmates to assemble on the streets marked on the map at 10.30 a.m. Wear something that symbolises your desire for world peace and nuclear disarmament: e.g.: Carry flowers, wear white or white armband.

**HOW:**  
We will form a human chain around the streets outlined on map (an area this size was totally destroyed by the bombing in Hiroshima). Stand on the pavement nearest

The Square, and please do not stand on roads.  
At 11.00 a.m. Organisers will lead the walks, via the four main arteries into The Square where the rally will commence at 12.00 midday.

**WHO WILL BE THERE:**  
Speakers will include Dr John Campbell-McDonald the local representative of 'Physicians for Prevention of Nuclear War'; Aline Pengilly, a City Councillor; Roger Middeless, Trades Council representative. Chair person will be Rev. Enid Bennett.

Also experience 'Night on Bald Mountain' an antinuclear dance drama with Liong & Faye at the Teachers' College auditorium, August 6 and 7. Tickets from Bennetts Bookshops or Trade Aid Shop.



Perimeter roads to assemble on  
Main arteries to square  
Direction to walk to square  
Area bounded by this line is equivalent to that totally demolished and buried in Hiroshima in 1945.  
Hatched area shows size of 'half-demolished' area in Hiroshima

A Hiroshima Day advertisement which shows a partial map of the city. The solid lined square marks the roads where people were to form a ring. This block which was marked by Botanical Rd, Tremain Ave, Ruahine St, Te Awe Awe Ave and the Esplanade represented the area which would have been totally destroyed by the Hiroshima bomb. (*Evening Standard*, 4<sup>th</sup> August 1983, p. 5).

The Hiroshima Day Rally organised by the Manawatu Peace Movement began on the Saturday morning with a human ring around the equivalent area in the city that would have been completely destroyed by the Hiroshima atomic bomb had it been dropped on Palmerston North. This was a common technique used by the peace movement. A walk around this area had occurred in the 1982 Dunedin Hiroshima day commemorations and groups frequently drew maps indicating the scale of the blast zone and displayed them as a part of their campaigns.<sup>309</sup> It renewed the sense of threat by bringing the issue of nuclear war into people's city streets. Following the human ring, people walked to the square where Dancers performed part of 'Night on Bald Mountain'. Peace songs were sung, a recorded nuclear explosion was played and the participants had three minutes silence for the victims of nuclear war.<sup>310</sup> The rally also heard speeches from a number of speakers. They included Sir Guy Powles (former Ombudsman and

<sup>308</sup> 'Nuclear protest in dance-drama', *Evening Standard*, 5<sup>th</sup> August 1983, p. 2.

<sup>309</sup> *Peace Movement New Zealand Newsletter*, September 1982, p. 10.

<sup>310</sup> *Evening Standard*, 6<sup>th</sup> August 1983, p. 1.



patron of the NZNFZC), Dr John Campbell-MacDonald, Cr Aline Pengelly, Rev. Enid Bennett and Trades Council Representative, Roger Middlemass. The Mayor had a previous engagement and so he declined the Manawatu Peace Movement's invitation for him to be present.<sup>311</sup> Two and a half thousand people turned out for the rally, some carrying banners proclaiming 'be active, not radioactive' and 'I want my baby to live'.<sup>312</sup> The number in attendance was an indicator of the growing concern about nuclear weapons and peace group efforts in Palmerston North since the first attempt to have the city declared a NWFZ. The Hiroshima Day rally a year earlier had attracted a mere 50 – 60 people.<sup>313</sup> The MPM hoped that the event would help convince the Council to reconsider its earlier decision.

Publicity and education appear to have contributed to support for the Rally and the petition, however, the MPM was not relying solely on overt public pressure. What the media was not covering was the ongoing letter writing campaign. Concerned citizens wrote to the Mayor in the wake of the formation of the MPM. He received 15 letters asking him to consider making Palmerston North a NWFZ from May through to August in 1983.<sup>314</sup> Some of the more frequent writers were Quakers, including the Woolfords and Jocelyn Thornton. Freda Larsen stated that there was a concerted effort by Quakers to write letters.<sup>315</sup> This was influenced by a National directive from David Bewick (the liaison officer of the Friends Yearly Meeting Peace Committee) to peace correspondents at the monthly Quaker meetings. It encouraged those from the Society of Friends (Quakers) to write to their local authorities asking for areas to be declared NWFZs.<sup>316</sup> Other writers included known members of the Manawatu Peace Movement, such as the Ferrys. While the call to have Palmerston North declared a NWFZ was central, the reasons why the council should do so differed. Two correspondents referred to Helen Caldicott's lecture making them aware of the nuclear danger.<sup>317</sup> Other correspondents called upon the council to reflect on the risk to loved ones<sup>318</sup> and particularly to act for the

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<sup>311</sup> Letter to Deborah Bertraud from Brian Elwood, 1<sup>st</sup> August 1983, PNCC Series 1/5/5 8/57 Part 1, Ian Matheson City Archives.

<sup>312</sup> *Evening Standard*, 6<sup>th</sup> August 1983, p. 1.

<sup>313</sup> *Peace Movement New Zealand Newsletter*, September 1982, p. 8.

<sup>314</sup> PNCC Series 1/5/5 8/57 Part 1, Ian Matheson City Archives.

<sup>315</sup> Freda Larsen, Interview with author, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2004.

<sup>316</sup> David Bewick, April Peace Letter, 26<sup>th</sup> April 1982, Religious Society of Friends in New Zealand, Further Records, 92-297-4/10, ATL.

<sup>317</sup> Letter to Brian Elwood from Linda McBride, 17<sup>th</sup> May 1983; Letter to Brian Elwood from Jocelyn Thornton, 14<sup>th</sup> June 1983, PNCC Series 1/5/5 8/57 Part 1, Ian Matheson City Archives.

<sup>318</sup> Letter to Brian Elwood from E. Brew, 20<sup>th</sup> May 1983, PNCC Series 1/5/5 8/57 Part 1, Ian Matheson City Archives.



future of children.<sup>319</sup> Another common theme in letters referred to other Council declarations and asked the Palmerston North Council to follow their example. Local rivalries were invoked, neighbouring Horowhenua was referred to twice as a place to emulate.<sup>320</sup> The sense of following other Councils also came from correspondence the Council received from their counterparts from around the country informing them of their own nuclear free stands.<sup>321</sup> Letters also frequently addressed concerns about the significance of NWFZs. The belief was that although the zones were small gestures, it was important that some action be taken. Dr J. A. Springett described the idea as 'silly and impractical' prior to expressing the desire to have local and central Government representatives that were dedicated to a nuclear freeze.<sup>322</sup> Marilyn Woolford wrote about the importance of symbolic gestures by saying they 'nourish and express the heart and soul of a person or city'.<sup>323</sup> She continued by asking Mayor Elwood not to deny the citizens of Palmerston North this form of expressing their commitment to a nuclear weapons free future.<sup>324</sup> Her husband Graham Woolford was more confrontational when he questioned the Mayor on his opposition to symbolic gestures. He wrote that he had heard it was due to the Mayor considering it a 'radical union, communist inspired idea'.<sup>325</sup> Elwood responded by refuting the accusation which had never been reported and stating his opinion on symbolic gestures. 'I have ... expressed the view that where there are alternatives which may be more effective, symbolic gestures can achieve very little. A declaration that Palmerston North is a nuclear-free zone would have no practical or legal effect'.<sup>326</sup> Elwood concluded by reinforcing the 1982 Council decision and referred to letters he had sent to leaders around the world. This is the pattern by which Mayor generally responded to the letters, he would refer to the common concern for world peace before stating that the Council had responded to this through its resolution in June 1982.<sup>327</sup>

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<sup>319</sup> Letter to Brian Elwood from Linda McBride, 17<sup>th</sup> May 1983; Letter to Brian Elwood from Geraldine Mildon, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1983; Letter to Brian Elwood from Erna and A.G. Ferry, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1983, PNCC Series 1/5/5 8/57 Part 1, Ian Matheson City Archives.

<sup>320</sup> Letter to Brian Elwood from Linda McBride, 17<sup>th</sup> May 1983; Letter to Brian Elwood from Erna and A.G. Ferry, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1983, PNCC Series 1/5/5 8/57 Part 1, Ian Matheson City Archives.

<sup>321</sup> PNCC Series 1/5/5 8/57 Part 1, Ian Matheson City Archives.

<sup>322</sup> Letter to Brian Elwood from Dr. J.A. Springett, 24<sup>th</sup> May 1983, PNCC Series 1/5/5 8/57 Part 1, Ian Matheson City Archives.

<sup>323</sup> Letter to Brian Elwood from Marilyn Woolford, 1<sup>st</sup> August 1983, PNCC Series 1/5/5 8/57 Part 1, Ian Matheson City Archives.

<sup>324</sup> Letter to Brian Elwood from Marilyn Woolford, 1<sup>st</sup> August 1983, PNCC Series 1/5/5 8/57 Part 1, Ian Matheson City Archives.

<sup>325</sup> Letter to Brian Elwood from Graham Woolford, 11<sup>th</sup> June 1983, PNCC Series 1/5/5 8/57 Part 1, Ian Matheson City Archives.

<sup>326</sup> Letter to Graham Woolford from Brian Elwood, 20<sup>th</sup> June 1983, PNCC Series 1/5/5 8/57 Part 1, Ian Matheson City Archives.

<sup>327</sup> PNCC Series 1/5/5 8/57 Part 1, Ian Matheson City Archives.

While most correspondents received this standard response, some letters began to reveal a change in the Mayor's perspective. In a response to Margaret Perowne, Elwood indicated that he had made a decision about the ongoing pleas for Palmerston North to be nuclear free. 'I have myself given anxious thought to the question of nuclear weapons free zone declarations and I hope my decision will be seen for what it is, the giving of an opportunity for people to express an opinion in a way they consider to be effective.'<sup>328</sup> While far from being a sign of support, the Mayors statements appear to show a willingness to give in to requests for a declaration. Another response confirms that the Mayor had made a decision about a Palmerston North zone and that he was more conciliatory in his views about symbolic gestures.

I accept that symbolic gestures do have a place on occasions and can stand alongside direct action. Throughout my life I have tended to rely upon action rather than gesture. I have given anxious thought to the views of those who wish to see a symbolic gesture of concern about the proliferation of nuclear weaponry and I hope you will be able to agree with the course of action I will be recommending to the Council at its next meeting. It is not appropriate for me to indicate that course of action until I have formally placed it before the Council but I hope that what is agreed will receive the support of the majority of councillors and citizens.<sup>329</sup>

It appeared that the campaign led by the Manawatu Peace Movement had reached a point where the Council was going to respond to the group who had organised a deputation to go to the Council earlier in August.<sup>330</sup>

While the MPM had designed a campaign to convince the Council to change their minds about the NWFZ, the movement also began to show a concern about how far the campaign should go. Marilyn Woolford wrote to the Mayor informing him that the planned Hiroshima Day Rally was not designed to be seen by the Council as coercive.<sup>331</sup> Secretary of MPM, Deborah Bertaud also expressed concern over the amount of pressure the Council should be placed under. The group was asked by Tom Newnham of the Auckland CND if the MPM would be interested in the local body politician nuclear free register. This was a campaign to have local body candidates sign a nuclear free pledge prior to the elections in October. A list

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<sup>328</sup> Letter to Margaret Perowne from Brian Elwood, 10<sup>th</sup> August 1983, PNCC Series 1/5/5 8/57 Part 1, Ian Matheson City Archives.

<sup>329</sup> Letter to Marilyn Woolford from Brian Elwood, 15<sup>th</sup> August 1983, PNCC Series 1/5/5 8/57 Part 1, Ian Matheson City Archives.

<sup>330</sup> Letter to Deborah Bertaud from Brian Elwood, 1<sup>st</sup> August 1983, PNCC Series 1/5/5 8/57 Part 1, Ian Matheson City Archives.

<sup>331</sup> Letter to Brian Elwood from Marilyn Woolford, 1<sup>st</sup> August 1983, PNCC Series 1/5/5 8/57 Part 1, Ian Matheson City Archives.

of those candidates was printed in papers around the country, hoping that the 'peace vote' would support them. Bertaud responded by expressing the MPM view that such a step would be damaging to their objective.

We feel that to approach Councillors at this stage would damage our campaign. We are also concerned that approaching Councillors in neighbouring areas "out of the blue" could prejudice the chances of local groups we support achieving this goal later. The value of a National Register of local body politicians does not seem to justify the risk.<sup>332</sup>

The group did however agree to assist with a register of Parliamentary candidates after the local NWFZ campaign. Concern about the pressure the Council was under was expressed, the MPM tended to have a good working relationship with the Council. Brian Elwood advised Paul Gander that further advertisements could be counterproductive, so the group decided against further action. Cr Robyn Leeming contacted them about changing the deputation date after Deputy Mayor Gordon Kear's death, however, the Mayor encouraged the meeting to go ahead a day later than planned on August 23<sup>rd</sup>.<sup>333</sup>

The Council meeting on the evening of August 23<sup>rd</sup> received a deputation from the MPM which included two speakers, Paul Austin and Dr John Campbell-MacDonald. Austin spoke of the widespread support in New Zealand for a nuclear free zone, which he said was exemplified by Heylen polls showing growing opposition to ship visits and the more than a million New Zealanders living in locally declared NWFZs. Austin also spoke about the petition which was presented that night with 5,590 signatures after six weeks of circulation. Austin said the petition 'represents 15 percent of the city's adults and about 70 percent of those presented with the petition signed it.'<sup>334</sup> Dr John Campbell-MacDonald began his speech by quoting Edmund Burke: 'No man made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could only do a little.'<sup>335</sup> In doing this he echoed sentiments from letters which acknowledged that a NWFZ was a small gesture but one that would help people voice their opposition. Campbell-MacDonald concluded his speech by asking the Council to follow the example of other areas.

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<sup>332</sup> Letter to Tom Newnham from Deborah Bertaud, 16<sup>th</sup> August 1983, Newnham, Thomas Oliver, 1926 -: Papers relating to anti-apartheid and peace movements, MS-Group-0320, 96-004-1, ATL.

<sup>333</sup> Minutes of MPM meeting, 17<sup>th</sup> August 1983, Dr John Campbell-MacDonald Personal Collection.

<sup>334</sup> Paul Austin, 'City declared to be a weapons-free zone', *Evening Standard*, 24<sup>th</sup> August 1983, p. 1.

<sup>335</sup> Edmund Burke, in, Dr John Campbell-MacDonald's Palmerston North Council speech, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1983, Dr John Campbell-MacDonald Personal Collection.

There are now 34 cities from Auckland and Hamilton to small rural towns like Eltham that have made this moral declaration. I beg you to join your fellow Councillors in an unequivocal, unambiguous declaration, to show your moral courage in declaring Palmerston North a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone.<sup>336</sup>

The Mayor had discussed the issue with MPM member and PMNZ regional representative, Paul Gandar, prior to the meeting and responded to the deputation with a written proposal.<sup>337</sup> It was a NWFZ declaration, but it was far from 'unequivocal' and 'unambiguous'. The resolution made it clear that the Council had no jurisdiction, but that the move was a way of accepting peoples concern over nuclear weapons.

Accepting the very real public concern about the proliferation of nuclear weaponry.  
And accepting that this Council has no legal capacity to control the extent of such proliferation or the location of nuclear weaponry.

And accepting that an expression of concern about the proliferation of nuclear weaponry can take different forms.

And accepting that to many citizens concern about the proliferation of nuclear weaponry can be effectively expressed by a public declaration of the city as a nuclear weapons-free zone.

And accepting that the proliferation of nuclear weaponry can only be finally contained and eliminated through the multi-lateral decisions of those countries with nuclear weapons capability.

And accepting and acknowledging New Zealand's responsibilities under its Defence Treaty obligations.

The Council resolves as an expression of its concern about the proliferation of nuclear weaponry, that Palmerston North City be declared a nuclear weapons-free zone.<sup>338</sup>

The resolution was discussed with Councillors Paul Rieger, Pat Kelliher, Don Irvine, Graham Hubbard and Aline Pengelly speaking in support of the motion. Pengelly said she supported the move because she felt peace initiatives had to come from the grassroots and that the resolution did that.<sup>339</sup>

Not all Councillors were in support of the Mayors proposals, Crs Les Baty and Robyn Leeming both voted against the resolution which passed despite their opposition. While Baty did not comment on his opposition, Robyn Leeming maintained her position from the earlier attempt, that Councils were not responsible for making this decision. Stating that only the state

<sup>336</sup> Dr John Campbell-MacDonald's Palmerston North Council speech, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1983, Dr John Campbell-MacDonald Personal Collection.

<sup>337</sup> Dr John Campbell-MacDonald, Interview with the author, 26<sup>th</sup> June 2004.

<sup>338</sup> Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone, Council Meeting, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1983, PNCC Series 1/5/5 8/57 Part 1, Ian Matheson City Archives.

<sup>339</sup> 'City declared to be a weapons-free zone', *Evening Standard*, 24<sup>th</sup> August 1983, p. 1.

had the right to determine foreign policy, she believed that a NWFZ did nothing to resolve arms proliferation and only made individuals feel good.

If I vote banning weapons from the Manawatu River and the Council chamber, I can feel morally righteous and feel good about being a small person doing something. But I've made no effort to get to those powers that be ... I believe declaring Palmerston North a nuclear weapons-free zone is an empty, meaningless gesture which carries no weight whatever in trying to stop this mayhem.<sup>340</sup>

While the declaration was passed, in part due to public support and demand, not all of the public responded positively to the decision. The regular correspondent to the *Evening Standard*, L. Geo King wrote opposing the decision, claiming that the logic of Councillors such as Pengelly was flawed. He also questioned why it was only nuclear weapons to be cited, asking why not ban all warfare.<sup>341</sup> In the weeks following the letter to the editor page was filled with controversy about a South Korean plane that was shot down by the Russians. An editorial suggested that the peace movement would have been vocal if it had been a western country in the wrong.<sup>342</sup> Comments about the movement standing with their red friends, revealed that even though the Council had made a declaration, not all were sold to the assumed views of the peace movement.

After Palmerston North had been declared a NWFZ, the issue of what it meant was raised. Dr Campbell-MacDonald reflected on the symbolic nature of the declaration and the literalist interpretation of the decision.

Literalists have one meaning for a word. They take the nuclear free declaration as meaning that the city can somehow put a road block to stop a convoy of nuclear weapons coming through. Clearly our city can't, it was a moral declaration ... We might be able to stop it through mass action. Someone actually sitting in front of the truck. No way would I expect the city council to do that. We just told people that we realise that the Kremlin is not trembling in fear at the thought of Palmerston North becoming nuclear free, we realise that.<sup>343</sup>

<sup>340</sup> Robyn Leeming, in, 'City declared to be a weapons-free zone', *Evening Standard*, 24<sup>th</sup> August 1983, p. 1.

<sup>341</sup> L. Geo King, 'Dramatic Failure', *Evening Standard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1983, p. 2.

<sup>342</sup> 'Editorial', *Evening Standard*, 5<sup>th</sup> September 1983, p. 2.

<sup>343</sup> Dr John Campbell-MacDonald, Interview with the author, 26<sup>th</sup> June 2004.



He continued by stating the declaration was a way for people to express themselves in a form of written opposition.<sup>344</sup> While Dr Campbell-MacDonald made it clear that he did not expect drastic action from the Council, there were times after the declaration, when the public called on the council to act in support of their declared stand. One instance was the first local Government nuclear free zone conference to be held in Manchester in April 1984. The NZNFZC sent a letter to the Council in February of that year to ask if the Council would be willing to give financial support to Larry Ross so he could attend.<sup>345</sup> Cr Pengelly supported this proposal and calculated that based on the population of the city as a percentage of those living in NWFZs in New Zealand, the Palmerston North share would be 245 dollars. Pengelly moved that Ross be given this amount and was supported by Cr Pat Kelliher. The proposal was rejected by the Council with ten votes to three. Reasoning for rejection was that the Council knew little about Ross and the NZNFZC and was hesitant that he could represent the views of local authorities.<sup>346</sup> The Council was not flatly against sponsoring a representative, it was more a matter of who that representative could be. The Council was approached by the Mt Eden Borough Council to see if they would be willing to contribute funding for the Deputy Mayor David Perfect to attend and represent them. Again Crs Pengelly and Kelliher supported the suggestion. This time the Council agreed and gave Perfect 200 dollars.<sup>347</sup> The Manawatu Peace Movement was supportive of the Councils action and said it showed that the Council was taking the NWFZ status seriously.<sup>348</sup>

While the Council was being represented abroad by Cr David Perfect in April 1984, the City Council was again being asked to put their declaration into action. The MPM began to express its concerns over the Acorn base at Tangimoana. The base was a secret communications instalment which the MPM believed was a nuclear target. Other military facilities in the region were not commented on as threats. The group stated that 'It appears to mean that we have on our doorstep the prime nuclear target in New Zealand. If ACORN is what it seems to be, it means that New Zealand is playing an active part in US preparations for nuclear war.'<sup>349</sup> Margaret Perowne wrote to the Town Clerk, P. Apthorp, asking if the Council would make some enquiries about the base due to Palmerston North being the closest city to

<sup>344</sup> Dr John Campbell-MacDonald, Interview with the author, 26<sup>th</sup> June 2004.

<sup>345</sup> Letter to Local Body Councillors from Larry Ross, February 1984, PNCC Series 1/5/5 8/57 Part 1, Ian Matheson City Archives.

<sup>346</sup> 'No City money for delegate to nuke meeting', *Evening Standard*, 29<sup>th</sup> February 1984.

<sup>347</sup> 'City represented at nuke meeting', *Evening Standard*, 27<sup>th</sup> March 1984.

<sup>348</sup> Manawatu Peace Movement Newsletter, No. 8, 4<sup>th</sup> April 1984, p. 3.

<sup>349</sup> Manawatu Peace Movement Newsletter, No. 8, 4<sup>th</sup> April 1984, p. 1.



the installation in Tangimoana.<sup>350</sup> The letter was addressed by the Council at its next meeting and they agreed to approach the Prime Minister about Acorn. Cr Pengelly said that since the Council made a NWFZ declaration it had to carry on with the implications of that move and that the Council could not sit back and say it was someone else's job to ask about Acorn.<sup>351</sup>

The Council made some concessions when dealing with nuclear free concerns after it made the declaration. However, in many ways the declaration appeared to be somewhat of an anti climax. The MPM achieved its goals and then moved on to other concerns, notably Tangimoana, but also the Vote for Peace campaign.<sup>352</sup> By becoming the 35<sup>th</sup> Nuclear Weapon Free Zone, Palmerston North added to the growing national tally which gave a sense of growing anti nuclear sentiment.<sup>353</sup> The zone was pushed by peace people as a way of expressing concern. There is little evidence that the declaration made any waves beyond the pages of the *Evening Standard* and the addition of the city on the NZNFC map. Nor is there any sign other than the reported percentage who signed the petition when approached, that the declaration represented the majority of citizens, as was hoped for by Paul Austin at the start of the campaign.<sup>354</sup>

Yet the goal of a nuclear free city, clearly captured the imagination of some residents. It gave the new Manawatu Peace Movement a goal that people could work for. The end goal allowed the various components of the campaign to be united in a common focus. It was a resultant campaign for the MPM. In the course of seeking the NWFZ the group also reached the general public, taking the issue out into the city. This is evidenced by the number who signed the petition and who turned up to the Hiroshima Day rally in 1983. The group also gained a significant public profile, helped by coverage of events and articles that appeared in the *Evening Standard*. The greatest impact of the Palmerston North NWFZ declaration came not from the actual council decision, but from the process that educated the public and gained enough momentum that the Mayor and Council reversed its decision of a year earlier.

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<sup>350</sup> Letter to P. Apthorp from Margaret Perowne, 11<sup>th</sup> April 1984, PNCC Series 1/5/5 8/57 Part 1, Ian Matheson City Archives.

<sup>351</sup> 'PM will face questions on Acorn base', *Evening Standard*, 1<sup>st</sup> May 1984.

<sup>352</sup> Manawatu Peace Movement Newsletter, No. 8, 4<sup>th</sup> April 1984.

<sup>353</sup> 'City declared to be a weapons-free zone', *Evening Standard*, 24<sup>th</sup> August 1983, p. 1.

<sup>354</sup> Paul Austin, in, 'Defence? Oh, Only Conventional, Please', *Chaff*, Vol. 50, No. 14, 6<sup>th</sup> July 1983, p. 12.

## ELTHAM

In 1983 the South Taranaki town of Eltham was home to just under 5000 people. In that year it also became the first NWFZ in Taranaki. The formation of the Eltham Nuclear Weapon Free Zone did not begin in a meeting of a Taranaki peace group; rather it had its beginnings in Waiheke Island. The local Waiheke peace group had successfully lobbied its county council to have Waiheke declared a NWFZ on December 15<sup>th</sup> 1982. As a means of implementing this decision the group assisted the County Council in writing to local bodies throughout the country.<sup>355</sup> At the end of March 1983, the Council's town clerk had sent letters explaining the steps it had taken. The Council had also written to nuclear powers asking them to assist in creating a Nuclear Weapons Free Pacific. The clerk also expressed the Council's wish for other local bodies to follow its example.

We, on behalf of the people of Waiheke, urge you to consider the step which we, along with those other local bodies have taken, and hope that you will do the same. Against a background of mounting tension among the nuclear powers, this is the least we can do to help secure a future for our people.<sup>356</sup>

The letter went on to suggest that a declaration was within the realms of council responsibility. 'Local Government has responsibility for the health and welfare of the people living in that area. By declaring our own area nuclear weapons free, we can contribute to the protection of our people from this ultimate threat to their lives.'<sup>357</sup> The letter was variously ignored, rejected or acted upon throughout the country. Palmerston North City Council ignored the letter, Eltham joined other Councils, such as Porirua, in acting upon the Waiheke Council's suggestions.<sup>358</sup>

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of April 1983 the Executive Committee of the Eltham Borough Council met. One of the items of business was the letter received from the Waiheke County Council. The response was a recommendation put forward by Mayor Margaret Smith.

<sup>355</sup> *Peacelink*, Issue 10, June 1983, p. 6, in, Thomas Oliver Newnham, 1926 -: Papers relating to anti-apartheid and peace movements, MS-Group-0320, 96-004-1, folder: Nuclear-Free Register: Local Bodies.

<sup>356</sup> Letter to Wellington Town Clerk from the Waiheke County Council Town Clerk C.F. Gargiulo, 29<sup>th</sup> March 1983, in, Wellington Archives, Town Clerk's File 00001:2140:60/4915 part 1 (Nuclear Power – General). Note the same letter was sent to councils throughout the country. The minutes from the Executive Committee on 14<sup>th</sup> April 1983, Eltham Borough Council Minute Book December 1982 – December 1983, p. 121 state the letter is in the appendix. However the appendix did not contain the document.

<sup>357</sup> Letter to Wellington Town Clerk from the Waiheke County Council Town Clerk C.F. Gargiulo, 29<sup>th</sup> March 1983, in, Town Clerk's File 00001:2140:60/4915 part 1 (Nuclear Power – General), Wellington City Archives.

<sup>358</sup> *Newsletter/ New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee*, May / June 1983, p. 6.

That the letter be received and that the Waiheke County Council be commended for the stand taken and canvassing of other authorities.

That the Eltham Borough Council do formally declare that the area described as the Borough of Eltham be a "Nuclear Weapon Free Zone".<sup>359</sup>

The motion was carried. The minutes do not reveal how many voted in support of the motion, yet it may be significant that no Councillors made a specific request for their opposition to be noted, which was done in later proposals regarding the nuclear free issue and about sending information to the NZNFZC.<sup>360</sup> The decision was not immediately newsworthy. While two days later there was a report in the *Daily News* about how the Taranaki County Council had rejected the idea put forward by Waiheke<sup>361</sup>, the Eltham decision failed to make any immediate headlines. Even the local community paper, the *Stratford Press*, did not report on the decision in the immediate weeks following. It was on May 4<sup>th</sup> that the public were first made aware that Eltham had been declared Nuclear Free by its council. In a section of the *Stratford Press* entitled 'Eltham Borough Briefs' there was a small paragraph detailing how Eltham had become a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone. 'After a full discussion over correspondence received from the Waiheke County Council referring to Nuclear Weapon Free Zones, the Eltham Borough Council recommended that they formally declare the area described as the Borough of Eltham, a "Nuclear Weapon Free Zone".'<sup>362</sup>

While NWFZs became a point of debate for local bodies throughout the country, the Eltham declaration provides an example of a zone gained with remarkable ease. The idea that the zones were representative of strong public feeling can not be substantiated by any examples of lobbying. It remains unclear exactly why the Council in this small rural borough were so willing to follow the Waiheke suggestion. The mix of individuals on the Council and the apparent sympathetic views of the Mayor may have contributed to the decision. Margaret Smith, a Catholic mother of six, was the first female Mayor in the Taranaki after being on Council for several terms. Smith appointed another woman as her deputy, Audrey de Jong, in a move that was unusual nationally. Former Councillor Don Drabble said there was apprehension about being ruled by a woman prior to acceptance of her leadership.<sup>363</sup> Smith never saw

<sup>359</sup> Executive Committee on 14<sup>th</sup> April 1983, Eltham Borough Council Minute Book December 1982 – December 1983, p. 121.

<sup>360</sup> Executive Committee on 14<sup>th</sup> September 1983, Eltham Borough Council Minute Book December 1982 – December 1983, pp. 425 – 426.

<sup>361</sup> 'County Will Not Be Nuclear Free', *Daily News*, 16<sup>th</sup> April 1983, p. 3.

<sup>362</sup> 'Eltham Borough Briefs', *Stratford Press*, 4<sup>th</sup> May 1983, p. 16.

<sup>363</sup> Don Drabble, in, Virginia Winder, 'Taranaki Stories, Leading Women – Margaret Smith's Mayoral Milestone', <http://www.pukeariki.com/en/stories/leadingwomen/margaretsmith.asp>. Updated 4th June 2004.

herself as a feminist but was described by her one of her daughters as a greenie.<sup>364</sup> Her views may have been sympathetic, but this does not explain why the motion was passed, as she also voted against the use of a particular weed killing chemical, but her view was in the minority and the motion was passed.<sup>365</sup> Alternatively, the zone could have been passed as a measure due to a perceived lack of meaning – so therefore it may have been deemed to be unproblematic or in need of enforcing. However, there is no evidence of this being case in Eltham, on the contrary the Council gave ongoing support to peace initiatives. The seeming ease in which the declaration was passed leaves some doubts as to the role of the peace movement and the grassroots nature of the wider NWFZ movement.

The news of the Eltham declaration may have been slow in reaching the public, however the NWFZ did gain some response. There were no negative comments in letters to the Council or newspapers. The Council did receive two letters of congratulation. J. Elphick wrote commending the actions of the Council. 'I feel that it was a sane and humane course of action taken courageously in a province where one would expect to encounter a degree of conservative opposition'.<sup>366</sup> The other letter came from the Taranaki branch of the Values Party, which praised the Council for leading the way in Taranaki.<sup>367</sup> The response to the NWFZ declaration also resulted in a peace group being formed. The Methodist Minister of St Marks Church in Eltham, Rob Ferguson, was the first to respond to the announcement of the declaration in the *Stratford Press*. Ferguson, then a man in his early thirties, had previously shown that he was not one to shy away from making his political views known. He co-organised a march opposed to the Springbok tour which lead to acts of violence against the protestors from the Eltham public.<sup>368</sup> Rob Ferguson said his reaction to the news in the *Stratford Press* came as a surprise and made him think that perhaps Eltham should look at doing something about it.<sup>369</sup> Two weeks after the declaration was publicised he placed an advertisement in the classifieds of the *Stratford Press*:

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<sup>364</sup> Winder, 'Taranaki Stories'.

<sup>365</sup> Winder, 'Taranaki Stories'.

<sup>366</sup> J. Elphick, Letter to Eltham Borough Council, in, Correspondence in Ordinary Meeting Minutes, 20<sup>th</sup> June 1983, Eltham Borough Council Minute Book December 1982 – December 1983, p. 235.

<sup>367</sup> Taranaki branch of the Values Party, Letter to Eltham Borough Council, in, Correspondence in Ordinary Meeting Minutes, 20<sup>th</sup> June 1983, Eltham Borough Council Minute Book December 1982 – December 1983, p. 235.

<sup>368</sup> Geoff Chapple, 1981: *The Tour*, Wellington: Reed, 1984, pp 50 –52.

<sup>369</sup> Rob Ferguson, Interview with the author, 7<sup>th</sup> May 2004.

### ARE YOU A PEACEMAKER?

You are invited to meet with others who share a concern to promote peace in our world.

ALL SAINTS HALL, KING EDWARD STREET. ELTHAM

**Thursday, May 26, 7.30pm**

What can we do to promote peace in the face of world-wide nuclear arms escalation?<sup>370</sup>

The first meeting drew a small number of people from the area and a group initially known as the Eltham Peace group was formed. Its name was later changed in 1983 to the South Taranaki Peace group, although its activity remained centered in Eltham. The group drew an interesting mix of individuals. Among them was a former Art school couple Roger Peters and Maree Horner who moved to Eltham in 1981. Jack Alphrick, who had previously been involved in peace squadron activities, was also involved. Roger Peters said that the majority of members of the peace group had left within a few years leading to the group fading out. The movement was made up of the itinerants and immigrants to Eltham.<sup>371</sup> There were, however, a few locals who joined – including one farming couple and local woman Hazel Jenkins. It is also interesting, yet not surprising, that of the six people named as participating in the anti-tour march, 4 of them (Rob Ferguson, Brian Kyle, Maree Horner and Graeme Ries) were all members of the peace group.<sup>372</sup> The mix of individuals could have easily led to debate, yet it was remarkably absent, perhaps due in part to the strong leadership of Rob Ferguson and his replacement Roger Peters (Ferguson left for Palmerston North in 1984). Another reason for the consensus of the group came from the first meeting, during which the group spent time brainstorming ideas of activities they could undertake. Every individual's ideas were added to the list and were then worked through in the following years. In order to work consistently on these projects, the group met on the first Monday of every month. The meetings were held in members' homes and could attract up to 30 people.<sup>373</sup>

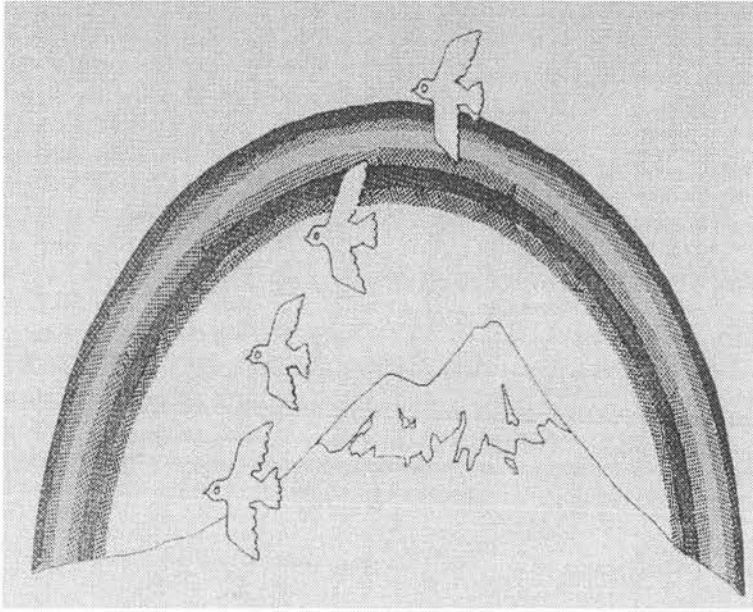
<sup>370</sup> *Stratford Press*, 18<sup>th</sup> May 1983, p. 27.

<sup>371</sup> Roger Peters, Interview with author, 18<sup>th</sup> June 2004.

<sup>372</sup> Chapple, pp. 50 -52; Letter to Greenpeace from Maree Horner and Roger Peters, 19<sup>th</sup> June 1984, Roger Peters Personal Collection.

<sup>373</sup> Roger Peters, Interview with author, 18<sup>th</sup> June 2004.





Logo of the South Taranaki Peace Group depicting Mt Taranaki and traditional peace icons of a rainbow and dove. From Roger Peters Personal Collection.

One activity members became involved in was writing letters to the editor in the *Stratford Press*. The vast majority of those surrounded debate between the peace group and the Minister of Defence, David Thomson, who lived minutes from Eltham. The antagonism was sparked when weeks after the first meeting of the peace group; Rob Ferguson received a letter from the Minister of Defence about the group. This was despite Ferguson's name never being publicly associated with the group at the time. He still is unsure how this came about and has questioned whether a peace group being set up so close to the Minister led to an informant being sent to this first meeting.<sup>374</sup> It also led to an unusual incident where the Minister responded to an invitation to attend a service at Ferguson's church, St Mark's, much to the surprise of the congregation. The strained relationship continued through the pages of the *Stratford Press* when Ferguson and Peters wrote criticising the Government's defence policy.<sup>375</sup> Thomson and his publicity officer, R.J. Sorley, both replied to these letters.<sup>376</sup> The political climate in the Taranaki was far from supportive. The letters pages also saw the peace groups being labelled as communist supporters.<sup>377</sup> This was of course denied and in one letter by peace group member Bronwyn Lash, she wrote 'I don't vote Labour; I am not a communist, I

<sup>374</sup> Rob Ferguson, Interview with author, 7<sup>th</sup> May 2004.

<sup>375</sup> Rob Ferguson, 'Comments Astonish', *Stratford Press*, 9<sup>th</sup> June 1983; Roger Peters, 'Nuclear Deterrence: A Reply', *Stratford Press*, 15<sup>th</sup> June 1983.

<sup>376</sup> R.J. Sorley, 'Nuclear Deterrence: A Reply', *Stratford Press*, 15<sup>th</sup> June 1983; David Thomson, 'Minister Replies on Nuclear Disarmament', *Stratford Press*, 28<sup>th</sup> July 1983.

<sup>377</sup> Libra, 'Peace Protests', Letter to editor, N.D, Roger Peters Personal Collection.



am a mother'.<sup>378</sup> The South Taranaki Peace group became supporters of the Votes for Peace campaign in the lead up to the 1984 election. The group had meetings with candidates from Labour, Social Credit and Values. National refused all invitations. While the group was pleased that Thomson was retiring they knew the National Party and their defence policies still gained considerable support in Taranaki. The organisation was very much "aware that while the country was going red, they were waking up to a bluer Taranaki."<sup>379</sup>

While the local MP was opposed to the sentiments of the South Taranaki Peace Group, the group had a better relationship with the Council whose actions led to its foundation. The group saw its activities supported by the Mayor and Council. In 1983, peace educator, Jim Chapple visited Eltham twice and on one of these occasions the Mayor organised a meeting where he could speak to Councillors.<sup>380</sup> The group also received support for the concept of a Peace Garden, which it began by planting a peace tree on Arbour Day.<sup>381</sup> The Council then agreed to gift land in Bridger Park, by the local Scout den, for the Peace Garden.<sup>382</sup> Native plants and a 'peace' rose were planted and the area was used for peace activities such as Hiroshima Day.

The group reciprocated the generosity of the Council by donating a collection of peace books to the Eltham library. The books were received with thanks by the Librarian and Town Clerk.<sup>383</sup> The South Taranaki Peace group kept regular contact with the Mayor about its activities and future plans. The most significant sign of support from the Council arose around the planned visit of Larry Ross who came to Eltham to speak on the 28<sup>th</sup> of February 1984 at the town hall. The public meeting was called and arranged through the office of Mayor Margaret Smith. The lunchtime meeting was attended by a paltry 25 people. However, the event did gain media coverage, which stated that Mayor Smith believed the zone was important in stopping the feeling of despair.<sup>384</sup> The South Taranaki Peace group made frequent references in its correspondence about the support it received from the Eltham Borough Council. In a letter to the Votes for Peace campaign, Roger Peters described the support. 'Our group has been carrying out a range of activities in the area over the past year. This has been

<sup>378</sup> Bronwyn Lash, 'Letters to the editor', *Stratford Press*, 6<sup>th</sup> July 1983.

<sup>379</sup> Roger Peters, Interview with author, 18<sup>th</sup> June 2004.

<sup>380</sup> Letter to Mayor and Councillors from Roger Peters, 10<sup>th</sup> December 1983, Roger Peters Personal Collection.

<sup>381</sup> Letter to Mayor and Councillors from Roger Peters, 10<sup>th</sup> December 1983, Roger Peters Personal Collection.

<sup>382</sup> Letter to Peacelink from Roger Peters, 16<sup>th</sup> February 1984, Roger Peters Personal Collection.

<sup>383</sup> Letter to Peacelink from Roger Peters, 16<sup>th</sup> February 1984, Roger Peters Personal Collection.

<sup>384</sup> Margaret Smith, in, 'Peace Address to Eltham Audience', *Taranaki Herald*, 29<sup>th</sup> February 1984, p. 6.

made easier by the fact that Eltham Borough Council has been a NWFZ. The support we have had at Local Body level is in contrast though, to that given by our Parliamentary Reps'.<sup>385</sup>



*Some members of the South Taranaki Peace group outside the Eltham Town Hall on February 28<sup>th</sup> 1984. Top (from left): Danny Hogan, Ann Stockman, Kevin Dawson. Bottom (from left) Larry Ross, Alison Crafer. From Taranaki Herald, 29<sup>th</sup> February 1984, p. 6.*

The Eltham NWFZ declaration provided yet another way that the zones were formed and enacted. Firstly, it revealed a connection with other Councils. The issue of zones did not remain solely in the hands of peace groups, rather Councils, such as Waiheke, contacted other local bodies about the decision. The willingness of the Eltham Borough Council to accept the Waiheke suggestion still lacks a concrete explanation. The Council made the decision under no pressure, yet despite this, no opposition was made against the Eltham NWFZ. There was evidence of hostility to other peace group ideas, but not to the zone itself. I do not think this can be dismissed as an example that the zone itself was not seen to mean anything concrete and therefore not worthy of criticism. Unlike many Councils, the Eltham Borough continued to support the concept of a NWFZ and the views and activities of the South Taranaki Peace

<sup>385</sup> Roger Peters, Letter to Votes for Peace from Roger Peters, 28<sup>th</sup> February 1984, Roger Peters Personal Collection.

group, even to the point of designating Council land to the group. Yet, perhaps the lack of direct opposition was due to limited awareness of the NWFZ, as the declaration was slow to be publicized. What is also interesting about the Eltham declaration is the formation of the South Taranaki Peace Group as a result. One of the perceived benefits of the NWFZ campaign nationally, was that the process would cement peace groups and allow them to educate the public. Yet in this instance we see it occurring in the reversed order, a group was formed after the declaration. The Eltham declaration does not fit any of the previously held views on the development of NWFZs. This is the value of this particular case study, in that it shows that local NWFZs were not a homogenous campaign. Rather, the excess of a hundred NWFZs need to be treated, to an extent, as individual representations of concern surrounding nuclear weapons in New Zealand.

## CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of local Government NWFZs in New Zealand followed increased anti nuclear activity both nationally and internationally and in turn spurred further action nationally. That the first zone in Devonport was developed without a national peace organisation indicates a wider co-ordinated campaign was not necessary for such declarations. The individual local zones were rather a product of varying processes, which makes it difficult to draw any broad national conclusions as to their nature.

The key focus in secondary literature on the role of peace people effecting change through grassroots lobbying is called into doubt by the case studies of Wellington and Eltham where they are very much on the periphery of the decision to have a NWFZ for their town/city. Rather than matching the idea of the zones representing widespread public opinion, and being the result of extensive grassroots activity these two case studies show that intensive peace movement interaction with the notion of a zone came after its declaration. In the case of Eltham we saw a group being formed as a result of the declaration and then becoming engaged in wider peace movement activities. Wellington had a complex interplay of the zone and the subsequent opposition to nuclear ship visits. The NWFZ was used as justification for opposition to the ships entering Wellington's port, and as rationale for the Women's Disarmament Exhibition and Peace Festival activities. The existence of a zone gave a focus for further anti-nuclear mobilisation. The symbol had become a political tool. In both cases, instead of the zones being a product of a grassroots campaign we see the role of Councillors themselves taking up the idea. In the literature the depiction of Councils had been that they were reluctant bodies in need of convincing, yet these two case studies show that there were enough people within the Council to pass the motion. In one case with the support of the mayor, in the other despite his opposition.

While two of the case studies challenge the grassroots origin of the zones, the Palmerston North case study provides a model to reaffirm the dominant NWFZ discourse. The Palmerston North declaration was the result of a broader and more intensive campaign which included discussion about issues such as jurisdiction and the role of symbolism. The presence of a petition also indicated an element of public support for the zone. The case study is an important reminder that there are clearly examples that closely match the discourse. While this

thesis is challenging dominant perceptions, it is crucial to state that there was intensive peace movement participation in many of the NWFZs.

This thesis does not wish to down play the role of those active in such campaigns, but rather point to the diversity by which the NWFZs were achieved. As I neared the end of producing this thesis, I had the opportunity to go to Japan where I travelled to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Peace parks in both these cities memorialised the dead and injured, yet they called visitors to more than just remembrance, they called for prevention. They called for peace. At the Atomic Bomb Museum in Nagasaki among the images of destruction and unspeakable horror, the fossilised hand in melted glass, haunting stories of survivors, was a section on the development of the peace movement. One of the last exhibits in the museum displayed local authority nuclear weapon free zones and amongst this list was New Zealand's record. This experience reminded me of a statement by Carlyle: 'Men, seldom, or rather never, for any length of time, deliberately rebel against anything that does not deserve rebelling against.' This account challenged some of the strongly held myths surrounding the process by which local Government nuclear weapon free zones were created, yet has not intended to diminish the efforts of those who did participate in activities to bring about nuclear disarmament. People did react to the threat of destruction and said 'No', 'by any means possible'.

## APPENDIX A

# DECLARATION

IN SOLIDARITY WITH the poor of the world who suffer because of the massive excesses of the rich.

IN SOLIDARITY WITH those of our foreparents who, within the vision of their times, lived and worked for justice and freedom in our world.

IN SOLIDARITY WITH indigenous people of the Pacific for whom lifestyle, access to land, and social harmony have been disrupted and destroyed by the intruding forces of other nations and cultures.

I (we) the human being(s) in this place declare the following:

We wish to choose Life for ourselves and for the World.

We wish that our bodies be not "defended" by dropping nuclear bombs on other people — whether they are soldiers or civilians, children, women or men.

We wish that neither ourselves nor anything that is ours be made "safe" by threatening to use such weapons against people who "threaten" us.

We do not want any part of any nuclear weapon system to be helped by us or by our money or by the political system to which we belong.

We wish to use ourselves and our possessions to dismantle nuclear weapons and nuclear weapons systems which are in the Pacific Zone already, replacing them with human sharing, work, friendship and understanding.

We want this to happen NOW.

We will not leave this to other people to do for us. We will find ways (in partnership with others) of doing something about it ourselves.

## AND NEEDLESS TO SAY

We wish that it not come to pass that our own land or bodies, or the bones of our foreparents, or the bodies of our great grandparents or grandparents, or the bodies of our parents or children, or the bodies of our grandchildren or of our offspring into the future be vaporised, torn apart or mutated by any of these bombs going off over us.

WE NAME OURSELVES AND ALL THAT IS OURS AND THIS PLACE WHERE WE  
STAND AS A NUCLEAR WEAPON FREE ZONE FOR EVER.

KA WHAWHAI TONU MATOU

AKE! AKE! AKE!



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