

A PEACEFUL PURSUIT



Laurie Salas with an international poster showing the white poppy of peace.
Photograph: Ray Pigney.

Peace worker Laurie Salas believes that personal contact with people from other countries is the key to global harmony.

Laurie Salas doesn't fit the stereotype of a peace worker. Not exactly abristle with greenie badges, she's a small, sensibly clad lady of middle age, an eminently respectable doctor's wife whose pamphlets and conference reports are sheaved neatly in an attractive hand-held bag, rather than stuffed at random into a back pack.

She thinks the jeans and long hair image of the peace protester probably harks back to the 1960s and is therefore irrelevant now; but neither does she think she fits Sir Robert Muldoon's more recent classification of the peace movement as riddled with communists.

"I'm proud of my democratic country. I don't like the suggestion that because I work for peace I necessarily espouse the communist cause," she says. She's amused to think she's probably on the SIS files: the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, in which she's secretary of the NZ section is "suspect", she says ("without any obvious reason.")

"Everyone who's in any sort of peace organisation at all is suspected of being allied to communism. There's no logic in it. It's

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as illogical as any country continuing to build up the nuclear arsenal while so many people in the world go hungry and homeless.

"I always hope these people with fixed ideas will do a bit more reading, keep an open mind, stop dwelling on prejudices and false premises. I have a host of books that provide balanced international analyses — I'm sure people like Sir Robert and Air Vice Marshal Morrison would change their minds if they'd read some of them.

"People who think in pre-1945 terms really must change, because the whole world situation is taking on a new dimension with the advent of new technology weapons of mass destruction."

Laurie believes international peace will more likely be brought about by personal contacts with people from other countries than anything else. "The more we have to do with others, the more we're likely to realise they have the same interests, aspirations and

problems as ourselves. We can see them as friends, not potential enemies."

She has made many of her own overseas contacts at international peace conferences — in Paris in 1975, Oslo in 1978, New York in 1982, China in 1985, and this year, at Tashkent in the Soviet Union and in Holland.

Laurie has represented various organisations, including the National Council of Women and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. She is currently vice president of the United Nations Association of NZ, and vice-chairman of the Aotearoa Committee for the UN Year of Peace.

At the WILPF conference in Holland, Laurie says, resolutions included strong support for the UN as a uniting body to keep all nations talking to one another. "Keeping up that communication is the important thing."

The need was also stressed for ordinary people to keep a watch on developments (or lack of

developments) at the conference on disarmament in Geneva... and to urge action and deplore the lack of progress being made.

"There was also support for a nuclear-free zone extension, and educating people for peace."

The Asia and Pacific regional seminar in Tashkent during October, which Laurie also attended, was concerned about the stockpiling of nuclear weapons, the escalation of the military threat in the Asia-Pacific region, and the transforming of the Pacific Ocean into an area of military and political confrontation.

Laurie says delegates welcomed the Soviet programme for a phased reduction of nuclear, chemical and other weapons of mass destruction with a view to destroying their stockpiles by the year 2000, and the Soviet unilateral moratorium on all nuclear explosions, first announced in August, 1985, and now extended to January 1, 1987.

"We had high hopes for the success of the summit meeting between President Reagan and President Gorbachev, but unfortunately that wasn't to be," Laurie says.

— ROSEMARY VINCENT