Hiroshima in November 1945.
The US bomber had detonated the ‘atomic bomb’ about 600 metres above ground at 8.15 am on 6 August 1945.

Hiroshima 1956, when I visited.
In the millionth part of a second, a new sun flamed in the sky, a glaring white light,  
A hundred times brighter than the heavenly sun.  
And this ball of fire radiated several degrees of heat on the city of Hiroshima.  
At that moment, 86,100 people were burned to death.  
At that moment, 72,000 people were severely injured.  
At that moment, 6,820 houses were blown to pieces, and the vacuum thus created sucked them several miles into the air as particles of dust.  
At that moment, 3,750 buildings collapsed, and the ruins began to burn.  
At that moment, deadly neutrons and gamma-rays bombarded the site of the explosion over an area of three-quarters of a mile.

Karl Bruckner. The Day of the Bomb.

I visited Hiroshima in May 1956. It was the start of my anti-nuclear journey.

It was just over ten years after the US Air Force had bombed the city – the first time a nuclear bomb had been used in war.

At first, Hiroshima seemed a normal bustling city. However, the skyline was dominated by the ruins of the Industrial Exhibition Centre. This had been directly below the explosion centre, and the ruins had been left, and still remain, as a peace memorial.

Then we visited the Peace Memorial Museum*, which had been opened only the previous year. As well as photographs of those who suffered horrendous deaths, it contained a collection of their belongings – a child's melted bike, a wristwatch with its hands fused to the face ... heart-rending reminders of an awful act of war. The sight of a ‘Shadow’, where a human body had been vapourised and its remains burnt into the concrete, will haunt me always.

* "The Peace Memorial Museum collects and displays belongings left by the victims, photos, and other materials that convey the horror of that event, supplemented by exhibits that describe Hiroshima before and after the bombings and others that present the current status of the nuclear age. Each of the items displayed embodies the grief, anger, or pain of real people. Having now recovered from the A-bomb calamity, Hiroshima’s deepest wish is the elimination of all nuclear weapons and the realization of a genuinely peaceful international community."

Four of us young National Servicemen had been granted a month’s leave in Japan. This was the final day of our visit.

We were stationed in Hong Kong and were able to travel by troopship to and from the US Naval Base at Kure, but had to go as civilians, in civilian clothes and with Hong Kong civilian passports.

Before we left Hong Kong, we were given a War Office Discussion Brief entitled “Gentlemen or ‘Yellow Bellies’, which attempted to reconcile the brutality of many Japanese soldiers towards prisoners-of-war during the second World War, with the ‘code of restraint and manners’ which they observe in their home surroundings.

Everywhere we went, we were treated with, not only courtesy, but friendship and kindness, and attracted some humour at our sign language attempts to communicate.

These were a people who had been A-bombed!
I had enlisted for my two-year National Service on 2 September 1954. This had been brought in at the start of the Cold War in 1948, and was compulsory for all 18-year-old males.

However, a few of my contemporaries sought ways of avoiding it. We had grown up during the blitz and doodle-bug raids of the second World War, and the prospect of another seemed inconceivable, and National Service a waste of time. One of my schoolmates went for a mining engineering degree course and another for a marine engineering degree; both courses gave exemption. A third friend, who was a born-again Christian, obtained exemption but had to serve two years as an orderly in a tuberculosis hospital. We all had intense discussions about pacifism.

I agreed with my father’s stance that, ultimately, one might need to fight to defend one’s family and home. I joined what we perceived as a mainly defensive and non-combatant part of the services, the Corps of Royal Engineers. After basic training, I was posted to Hong Kong, our troopship, the *Empire Clyde*, arriving in May 1955.

There, on an advanced field engineering course, I learned that it was not just about building bridges. Besides learning to shoot to kill, I was taught how to lay minefields (including horrible anti-personnel mines) and set booby traps to kill and maim people. So much for wanting to be non-combatant!

Mercifully, the Chinese never invaded Hong Kong – and were never likely to – and I spent most of my time there operating a bulldozer.

However, I had been able to travel half way round the world – and to go on leave to Japan.

I returned in August 1956 to study for a degree in forestry at Oxford University.

A year later, a Government White Paper re-defined Britain’s defence role, due partly to costs of maintaining forces in Germany and the Far East, partly to decolonisation, and partly to the emergence of guided missiles and nuclear “deterrence” meaning there was no need for such large numbers of troops. National Service began to be phased out, the last intake being in 1960. I wasn’t aware of it immediately, but the White Paper also led to a change in forestry policy, as it was considered no longer relevant in a nuclear war to have built reserves of standing timber for use in conventional war; when I graduated there were simply no available forestry jobs in the UK.

In the late 1950s, the general public knew very little about the full effects of the A-bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The US occupying forces there had strictly controlled information “by censoring newspapers, by silencing outspoken individuals, by limiting circulation of the earliest official medical reports, by fomenting deliberately reassuring publicity campaigns, and by outright lies and denial” (https://theconversation.com/the-little-known-history-of-secrecy-and-censorship-in-wake-of-atomic-bombings-45213). Disinformation continued long after US withdrawal.

None of us in Britain had known much about the escalating “arms race” either. However, things were changing. Britain developed its own hydrogen bomb in 1957, emphasising its complicity in the confrontation with Russia. Moreover, France followed suit the following year. Most bomb tests had been above ground, and the danger of radioactive fallout saw the formation in Britain of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), which started a programme of public information and protest marches.

A special H-bomb issue in 1958 of the University magazine, *The Isis*, which I have kept, berated politicians for “this fantastic delusion” of Britain’s “formidable deterrent” outlined in the Defence White Paper. It maintained that a continual stream of government propaganda on radio, newsreels, and in newspapers was designed to condition people to accept the inevitably of the arms race, and force them to accept the “lunatic paradox that the arms race – which will eventually annihilate the status quo – is part of the status quo.”

Oxford undergraduates were strictly controlled by the University’s police, the Proctors, and participation in public demonstrations of any sort was forbidden. The Proctors initially denied permission to join CND marches, but then relented. Nevertheless few took part, fearing being fined or, worse, being sent down. I didn’t take part.
Oxford University Proctors relented on a ruling to prevent undergraduates participating in CND marches, as they had permitted a march by the University’s Officer Training Corps on Remembrance Day.

I graduated in 1960 and married Ann shortly afterwards. Problems of finding a long-time career in the absence of openings in forestry, and the need to save to buy a house and start a family preoccupied us.

Everyone was jolted into awareness by the so-called Cuban missile crisis in October 1962. The US had installed missiles in Italy and Turkey, so the Soviets in response moved to install some of their missiles in Cuba. The standoff between US President Kennedy and Soviet President Kruschev took their countries to the brink of nuclear war. Fortunately Kruschev backed down and took the missiles back, while in April 1963 Kennedy ordered the US missiles out of Italy and Turkey.

In Britain, the Civil Defence Corps was issued redesigned material that had been produced during the second World War, to distribute to advise householders how to build nuclear shelters and otherwise protect themselves against a nuclear strike. It included suggestions such as putting bookcases in front of windows to keep out radiation. Many believed that this had more to do with making the public feel that they could do something to protect themselves should nuclear war break out than with giving genuinely useful advice. The booklets implied that a nuclear war was survivable!

While skeptical, we all had to get on with our lives. For me, having a family and bringing them up, and moving to better jobs in different places was the main focus, and the possibility of war was pushed to the back of my mind. Redundancy in 1971 led ultimately to our big decision – we left England. I had accepted a job in the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR) in New Zealand, and we arrived in Wellington to begin a new life in October 1972.
Until we arrived here, I hadn’t known about the New Zealand Government’s representations to the French Government over its nuclear testing programme in the South Pacific and the radioactive fallout likely to harm the peoples of the neighbouring South Pacific nations.

However, a month after we arrived, a new Labour government was elected, and the new Prime Minister, Norman Kirk, advised that New Zealand would take action against French testing at the International Court of Justice. France pressed ahead notwithstanding, so, in mid-1973, New Zealand sent two frigates, HMNZS Otago and HMNZS Canterbury to the testing area at Moruroa as a protest (while US, British, Russian, and Chinese military forces were nearby merely as observers). A small fleet of private vessels went, too. Fraser Colman, a Government Minister was chosen by ballot to be on board the Otago, and two other Ministers, Phil Amos and Matiu Rata, went on private vessels. The heavy-handed arrests of occupants of the protest yacht Vega by French commandos brought enormous adverse publicity worldwide.

As a result of these protests, the French Government decided to move its tests underground.

Later that year, I was invited to become honorary editor of the NZ Science Review, the journal of the New Zealand Association of Scientists. This gave me the unexpected opportunity of making a small contribution to the anti-nuclear movement, by way of providing information. In the 4th issue of NZ Science Review for 1974, I was able to publish scientific articles about the levels of radioactivity in fallout from nuclear tests. Articles by Dr B. O’Brien of the Institute of Nuclear Sciences, and J. McCahon, of the National Radiation Laboratory gave increases as percentages of natural radiation received, but, in a third article, Dr Robert Mann, of the University of Auckland, asserted that putting the figures in this way was a political decision, as it minimised the fact that actual numbers of people would suffer genetic defects from this increase.

In 1974, too, the possibility of having nuclear power generation in New Zealand was being canvassed, prompting the Prime Minister to affirm that it would not be considered until the problem of disposal of toxic wastes had been solved. I obtained the promise of an article from Bob Mann about reasons for not having nuclear power in New Zealand, and was able to obtain an article from the New Zealand Electricity Department (NZED) putting their case for introducing it. The topic was considered so controversial politically that the Government established an Independent Fact-Finding Group on Nuclear Power under Sir Malcolm Burns (in 1975), and DSIR made ‘nuclear power’ one of the issues (with ‘native forests’) on which only designated spokesmen were allowed to comment. So, in the issue of NZ Science Review in which the articles by Bob Mann and an unnamed NZED author appeared (1976, no. 1), I used a pseudonym for my editorial arguing that selling nuclear power to a nation is a form of ‘economic aggression’ akin to drug trafficking.

At Bob Mann’s invitation, I attended the inaugural meeting of the Campaign for Non-Nuclear Futures (CNNF), held in Wellington on 12 June 1976 (see extract from Minutes, below). This was an amazing event. About 200 representatives attended. They came from a wide range of community groups, environmental groups, student groups, peace organisations, and women’s organisations – a total of over forty ‘associate’ organisations. Importantly, it was non-political.

We all were segregated into workshops to plan activities in gathering technical information, launching a petition to Parliament (to be called Campaign Half Million), gaining publicity, and so on, as given in the Minutes (below).
I was part of the newsletter workshop, and was asked to be the editor. I created a name, *Non-Nuclear News* (or NNN, for short), designed a layout, and with the information provided from the meeting and workshop, produced the first issue later that month. The first of its two pages is shown here.

The organiser of Campaign Half Million, Raewyn MacKenzie, from Auckland, had sprung into action quickly, as she expected initially to close the petition by 1 September. She had a network of hundreds of co-ordinators throughout New Zealand, and they organised signature gathering by door-knocking, at shopping areas and market stalls, in schools, churches, sports clubs, and businesses. Several groups declared 31 July 1976 'National Campaign Half Million Day', and organised walk-athons and other events to gather signatures (and campaign funds).

I was kept busy, working with Molly Melhuish, the CNNF Secretary, to gather information and assemble further newsletters. We included notices of talks by visiting overseas experts (such as Greg and Pat Minor, Walt Patterson, and Paul Ehrlich), energy conferences and digests of their proceedings, notices of relevant books (such as Patterson' book *Nuclear Power*), energy usage statistics, and information about alternative sources of energy.

In September 1976, the National Government announced the setting-up of a Royal Commission on Nuclear Power Generation in New Zealand, chaired by Sir Thaddeus McCarthy, which would take public submissions until 2 February 1977, as well as considering expert advice, and would report by 31 December 1977.

Because of this development, the CNNF decided that more frequent newsletters should be sent out after the fourth issue (in October 1976). I was relieved to be able to hand over the editing to Valerie Blennerhassett, who lived near Molly Melhuish and could liaise more easily with her than I could. It had become a huge spare-time commitment on top of my editing of the NZ *Science Review*.

This fourth issue gave information about the Royal Commission and its terms of reference, and encouraged everyone to make their own submissions in addition to the one that CNNF would prepare. It gave guidance on how to make a submission, and suggested that it was important to include broader economic and social consequences of alternative forms of energy supply as well as nuclear. Discussion of means of energy conservation was also important.

It was a revelation to me that simply anyone could make a submission!

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*This poster put out by CNNF recognised the addition to its aim of opposing nuclear reactors of: 'and in the waters under New Zealand’s control'.
The change to a National Government in late 1975 had brought a change in policy towards visits from US nuclear-powered warships with the capability of carrying nuclear arms. CNNF made it clear to its coordinators that the policy was for New Zealand to prohibit all nuclear power plants, whether on land or sea. If nuclear-powered ships arrived, it would still be worth while to sign the petition.

Although the petition didn’t reach its target of half a million before it had to be closed, it still passed a third of a million. Raewyn MacKenzie, the overall coordinator, presented it to the Parliamentary Select Committee on Petitions on 27 April 1977, just over 9 months after it had been started. It was the largest ever petition in New Zealand – an astonishing achievement!

Meanwhile, people had presented their submissions to the Royal Commission in January 1977. Of 141 submissions made, “by far the most were opposed to nuclear power.”

My personal submission covered:

- the capriciousness of hazards and uncertainties of risk analysis for nuclear accidents;
- nuclear power had become too expensive and would deprive those providing alternative energy sources of government finance;
- nuclear power plants alienated land semi-permanently and threatened the environment; and
- supporting people’s self-help towards energy conservation and use of alternative energy sources was the democratic solution to energy needs.

Over the previous year there had been several developments. NZED had revised its forecasts of increased demand downwards drastically. The Minister of Energy Resources stated that there was no longer any urgency about a decision on nuclear power generation. The DSIR supported investing in New Zealand’s own geothermal energy, and also suggested postponing any nuclear decision.

The Royal Commission concluded that New Zealand had “sufficient indigenous resources to enable it to meet its reasonably projected needs for electricity into the next century.”

A great victory for CNNF!

At the Annual General Meeting of CNNF in July 1978, it was resolved to dissolve the organisation as its aims had been fulfilled. It was subsumed into ECO – Environment & Conservation Organisations of New Zealand (Inc.).

Non-Nuclear News had been changed to Energywatch at the end of 1977, and continued for many years with Molly Melhuish as its editor. She became recognised as the energy guru the media turned to for independent comment on all energy policies and developments.

Many anti-nuclear activists turned their attention to visits to New Zealand by US nuclear warships. There was considerable public confusion over whether these were also capable of being nuclear-armed, and whether they were in fact nuclear-armed. US Government policy was to ‘neither confirm nor deny’ whether these ships were nuclear-armed. This policy was increasingly seen as arrogant.
The first visits, of the USS *Truxtun* and USS *Long Beach*, both in 1976, attracted an amazing waterborne protest, with large numbers of vessels obstructing them as they entered port. Many of us were concerned that the presence of nuclear-powered ships was exposing us to unnecessary risk of a nuclear accident. However, the main concern expressed by peace activists, notably the Peace Squadron, was that nuclear-powered ships might also be nuclear-armed, and we risked becoming a target if we were seen to be a regular venue for them.


In 1976, Labour MP Richard Prebble had introduced a South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Bill to Parliament, but it failed to get a majority. Mr Prebble tried again in 1982 with the Nuclear Free Zone (New Zealand) Bill, which would have banned only nuclear-armed ships, but not nuclear-powered ones, but again it was defeated. The following year, Social Credit leader, Bruce Beetham MP, introduced a Prohibition of Nuclear Vessels and Weapons Bill, but it, too, met the same fate.

**Meanwhile, in the USA.....**

(1) An accident at Three Mile Island nuclear power plant in Pennsylvania on 28 March 1979 threatened to cause a meltdown and a release of radioactive gases, which led to a general emergency and evacuation of pregnant women and young children near the plant. It brought to a halt all plans for new nuclear power stations in the USA.

(2) After the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, President Carter withheld signing a Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT II) treaty. Instead he signed, in July 1980, Presidential Directive 59 – ‘Nuclear Weapons Employment Policy’ – changing US strategy to preparing to fight a nuclear war in stages with the hope of ‘enduring’. This seemed to lower the threshold for the USA to start a nuclear attack. Carter’s successor, President Reagan, followed this up by proposing his ‘Star Wars’ defence initiative, aiming to protect America from a nuclear response. This, too, greatly heightened tension with Russia.

I had written an editorial in *NZ Science Review* in 1981 (volume 38, no. 5), saying that, because many scientists were contributing to weapons development and use, others should work with peace organisations to negate this. Scientists had international connections, which could be used to ‘build bridges’, and their knowledge could be used to make the public aware of their governments’ aggressive intentions. In the same issue I listed New Zealand peace organisations. More information about these groups and their activities were given in correspondence in the subsequent two issues of the journal.

At the Pacific Science Congress in Dunedin in September 1981, which I had attended to present a scientific paper, I was also a panellist at a discussion on freedom of information. I told the meeting that the USS *Truxtun*, which was due to visit New Zealand again in 1982, was described as being nuclear-armed in the American scientific literature; yet the US Government still maintained its stance to ‘neither confirm nor deny’! We needed scientists, with this knowledge and a sense of social responsibility, to speak up about these facts and show up the duplicity of political leaders on all sides. I reported this in *NZ Science Review* 1983, no 1.

I used a cartoon on the cover of *NZ Science Review* to show the nuclear powers carrying out their activities in our seas and skies.

This generated more correspondence than the journal had ever received before. In particular Dr Peter Wills and his colleagues, Dr Patricia Lewis and Professor Robert White, at the Physics Department, University of Auckland, wrote that they had formed a New Zealand Branch of Scientists Against Nuclear Arms (SANA).

In response to this, Dr Jock Churchman, of DSIR Lower Hutt, phoned me to say there was considerable interest in forming a SANA branch in Wellington/Hutt. Would I be willing to chair a meeting if he got people together? I wrote to Peter Wills about our plans, and he confirmed (7 June 1983) that they would welcome formation of other branches, and, within months, branches had also been formed in Waikato, Manawatu, Christchurch and Dunedin. Peter sent me a copy of their first newsletter (dated June 1983), which contained the constitution, based on the Australian SANA. He also referred people to my editorial in *NZ Science Review* 1983, no. 3, in which I gave a bibliography of recent articles about the arms race in overseas scientific journals, besides berating New Zealand media for their inadequate and biased coverage of the topic.

The initial local SANA meeting was held at the Institute of Nuclear Sciences, Lower Hutt, on 11 August 1983. About 40 scientists attended. I chaired it, outlining what SANA was, and describing contacts I had made with the local organiser of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), Dr Ian Prior, and the founder of Engineers for Social Responsibility (ESR), Gerry Te Papa Coates. I suggested that close links should be maintained with these groups. Our aims would be to inform ourselves, to talk to other groups and the public, and to provide specialist help to other groups.

**Scientist urges NZ role in broad peace effort**

NEW ZEALAND could have a big impact on international nuclear disarmament by acting as an independent adjudicator according to the co-ordinator of the newly formed Scientists Against Nuclear Arms group, Mr Geoff Gregory.

Mr Gregory, a Wellington scientist with the DSIR, addressed a meeting in Tauranga yesterday of people interested in having Tauranga declared a nuclear weapon-free zone.

“New Zealand is a non-nuclear country,” he said.

“W e should play a much more active and independent role as an adjudicator between the superpowers of Russia and America,” he said.

**Pressure**

Mr Gregory said that by expanding the number of nuclear-free zones in the world, pressure would be put on the superpowers to disarm.

“It doesn’t matter that we can’t stop the nuclear arms race, but it does put a great moral pressure on countries like Russia and America,” he said. “Too far, both superpowers have observed the nuclear-free zones.”

Mr Gregory said one particular frightening fact of the last few years was the 1980 American Presidential Directive 51, “In the event of a forceful attack by an enemy country of limited nuclear war being winnable,” he said.

“Scientists developed a fast-reacting weapon which was designed to start a limited nuclear war and win it.

“We believe this to be just crazy – it is impossible to control a war in war conditions, so we should protest very much at these weapons which include things like the cruise missile.”

Having been asked to talk to Tauranga Community College about “Science and Society” (later published in *NZ Science Review* 1983, no. 6), I took the opportunity of contacting the Tauranga Peace Group, as reported here, to talk to them about the arms race. I was also interviewed on their local radio station.
I started to give occasional talks – to schools, church groups, and Rotary Clubs, as well as to SANA and the NZ Association of Social Science Researchers. These I combined into an article about ‘The arms race: scientific aspects’ in NZ Science Review 1983, no. 5. I also appeared on Sharon Crosbie’s Morning Report on national radio, talking about the arms race and a phenomenon of atmospheric nuclear explosions known as ‘electro-magnetic pulse (EMP)’.

Other members of SANA also gave talks to schools and church groups. Dr David Lowe and Jim Salinger gave talks on their specialty, ‘nuclear winter’, and took a visiting Australian scientist, Dr Barrie Pittock, a specialist on the same topic to Parliament to speak to Helen Clark and other interested MPs.

In October 1983, I helped Philip Tremewen, a journalist with the Dominion, with information for Outlook (see extract alongside), a series of ‘Newspapers in Education’ posters devoted to the nuclear debate. With the payment I received, I was able to buy sets of these to give to schools.

Meanwhile the NZ Foundation for Peace Studies had organised a speaking tour, in April 1983, by Australian medical doctor Helen Caldicott, a prominent charismatic, anti-nuclear activist. She spoke to overflowing audiences in Auckland and Wellington. Marilyn Waring, a National MP who later (with Mike Minogue MP) crossed the floor when the next anti-nuclear bill was presented to Parliament, which precipitated a general election, described it as “transformative”, and her speeches “inspired people to act”. In particular, on 24 May 1983, women in Auckland organised a huge peace rally in support of the UK Women’s Peace Camp outside the US nuclear weapons base at RAF Greenham Common (near where Ann and I had lived, on Greenham Road, Newbury, when we were first married).

In April the following year the IPPNW, in conjunction with the NZ Foundation for Peace Studies and SANA, ESR, and nearly 20 other organisations, brought Helen Caldicott back again. I was among the full audience when she spoke at Wellington Town Hall. It was another enthusiastic crowd, who, after a karakia by Wiremu Parker, also heard from Professor Derek North, for IPPNW, and peace researcher Owen Wilkes, and the Topp Twins entertained us with appropriate ditties.

In Parliament, in June 1984, Richard Prebble again introduced the Nuclear Free New Zealand Bill. The was the one that Marilyn Waring and Mike Minogue voted for, against the National Government of which they were a part. The Government only defeated the Bill by one vote because two independent MPs voted with them. The Prime Minister, Rob Muldoon, in an apparent drunken pique, slated Marilyn’s “feminist anti-nuclear stance” and called a snap general election.

At that election, held in July 1984, the Labour Party, running an anti-nuclear campaign, won a landslide victory.
The new Prime Minister, David Lange, barred nuclear-armed or nuclear-powered ships from entering New Zealand waters. A US request for the USS Buchanan to visit was refused on the basis that it was capable of carrying nuclear weapons, although the US Government maintained its ‘neither confirm nor deny’ policy. The USA put strong pressure on New Zealand, threatening trade sanctions and effectively banishing us from all military cooperation. Most of us reacted strongly against these bullying tactics. According to subsequent opinion polls, the ban on nuclear-armed warships was widely supported by the New Zealand public. These, compared with earlier polls, showed a sea change from just under half the population to three-quarters opposing nuclear-armed ship visits (although the feeling about nuclear-powered ships was less definite).

PM David Lange’s subsequent riposte in an Oxford Union debate in March 1985 that he could ‘smell the uranium on the breath’ of his opponent brought worldwide acclaim and made us proud.

SANA members, in collaboration with IPPNW and ESR had begun producing single-page fact sheets on various nuclear issues, such as no. 7 (shown here) on Nuclear Weapons Free Zones. Other topics included: Nuclear winter in New Zealand; Cruise missiles; The doctrine of nuclear deterrence; Weapons for Star Wars; Fallout; and Nuclear forces in the Pacific. Altogether 17 of these fact sheets were pro-

In 1981, Larry Ross in Christchurch had established the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee, with the object of getting local councils, homes and workplaces to declare themselves nuclear-free.

One of the first councils to do so (by a narrow margin) was Wellington City, in April 1982. Labour Councillor Helene Ritchie proposed the motion and persuaded two of the Mayor’s majority Citizens party to effectively cross the floor to vote with Labour on this issue.

I declared our home and my work office nuclear-free zones, marked by stickers obtained from Larry Ross’s Committee.

By the 1984 election, 86 local councils had declared themselves nuclear-free. This accounted for nearly 2 million people (61 per cent of the population), which explained why Labour was voted in on a nuclear-free platform.

About this time, New York city was one of the earliest cities in the USA to defy US government policy and declare itself nuclear-free. This two-faced US official attitude on its policy did not go un-noticed in New Zealand.
The Royal Society of New Zealand created an ad-hoc committee to produce a review of the scientific data on the effects of a nuclear war in the Northern Hemisphere on New Zealand.

I was asked to edit it by the President, Dr Ted Bollard.

It contained articles describing the currently perceived climatic, medical, social, and economic effects to New Zealand of a nuclear war in the Northern Hemisphere. It also proposed ways of alleviating these threats and roles for scientists in so doing.

I finished the task in April 1985, and attended a function (by invitation) at which it was launched by Prime Minister David Lange.

Produced in 1984–1985 and they were circulated widely, including to MPs from all political parties. My own proposed fact sheets were pre-empted by the Dominion’s ‘Newspapers in Education’ posters (referred to previously), to which I contributed information and which I considered had a better prospect of delivering information more widely. I like to think that these activities of SANA, IPPNW, and the NZ Nuclear Free Zone Committee had contributed to a much better informed public wanting to have nothing to do with nuclear arms or nations using them to threaten others.

Meanwhile the Government was attempting to redefine New Zealand’s relationship with the USA in an ANZUS (Australia/New Zealand/USA) alliance that enabled military co-operation without us relaxing our policy of excluding nuclear weapons from New Zealand. Richard Prebble had re-launched the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone legislation, but the Government delayed implementing it. They wanted to first explore the implications for the nation’s defence policy. A completely new approach would be needed.

In May 1985, a small group of us in the Wellington/Hutt branch of SANA prepared a critique of the previous Defence Review, conducted in 1983, for the Minister of Defence Frank O’Flynn (see next page). It advocated a new way of thinking, and offered fully referenced advice on the latest ‘smart’ non-nuclear weapons available as a much cheaper and more effective way of meeting our defence needs.
While our daughters were attending Erskine College, Wellington, I was elected to the Parent/Teacher Association, and volunteered to become the school's coordinator for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award (D of E) scheme, a role which I filled from 1981 to 1984. One of the most challenging parts for me to organise was the Service requirement, but I managed to arrange series of activities with the Red Cross Auxiliary Unit, the Accident Compensation Corporation, and a local district nurse. I also discussed with the National Secretary, Brigadier Morrison, the possibility of making a Peace Studies syllabus for it. Coincidentally, Brigadier Morrison had been one of two New Zealand official military observers at the British atomic bomb tests at Maralinga, South Australia. He told me to 'go for it', and agreed to present a case for it to the New Zealand D of E Council.

I modelled it on the D of E syllabus for Commonwealth Studies, and based it on material from and discussion with the NZ Foundation for Peace Studies. The idea was for students to realise by personal contacts that people the world over are just like us. They have the same sorts of hopes and fears and loving relationships, and any differences between peoples are worth fostering, not fighting over.

Unfortunately the College closed in 1985, and Brigadier Morrison retired, and it became too hard for me to pursue the proposal further. Some United States Harpoon missiles were nuclear-capable. Anti-submarine and submarine warfare, which had been a key role for New Zealand, was part of the nuclear-war game, and as destabilising as the Star Wars scenario.

The report recommended frigates should be replaced by smaller, faster patrol ships of between 500 and 1500 tonnes equipped with guns and missiles.

The Dominion newspaper, 6 May 1985, summarised a SANA report to the Minister about a radical new defence policy.

We thought that there were lessons to be learned from the Falklands War of 1982, in which missiles were shown to be highly effective and warships highly vulnerable. Regrettably, Prime Minister Robert Muldoon had offered a New Zealand frigate in support of Britain's offensive there.
This report helped to make the Minister more receptive to the need to consult experts from outside the military establishment, as shown when he spoke at a seminar on 'The Next Step – The Retreat from a Nuclear Future towards Global Interdependence', organised by IPPNW and the Pacific Institute for Resource Management. At that seminar also, Professor John Roberts advocated setting up a committee to specifically encourage public participation in establishing New Zealand's future policies for national security.

In 1985, the Government announced that a Defence Committee of Enquiry would be set up, which, contrary to past precedents, would invite submissions from the public.

Peace organisations were excited by this prospect and immediately began to plan submissions.

A group of representatives of several of these organisations met in Wellington in October 1985 to discuss the implications of this unprecedented opportunity and devise strategies to persuade the Government that the defence needs of New Zealand could be fully met without any nuclear alliance.

I was a member of that group. I had chaired a SANA meeting in September at which a visiting British scientist, Professor John Ziman, spoke about non-provocative defence postures based on conventional weapons as an alternative to the European policies threatening use of so-called 'theatre' nuclear weapons. This alternative was being promoted by a British organisation called 'Just Defence'. I proposed that I should write to this group and obtain their permission to use their name for our group.

They were pleased to do so, and the New Zealand organisation Just Defence was born.

Weekly meetings were efficiently organised, with different members of the group taking on producing a letter-head, finding printers, setting up an account, organising fund-raising, and contacting suitable knowledgeable and distinguished people to act as technical advisers and patrons. We wanted to obtain authentic input from people with defence and diplomatic backgrounds. We used them to help us define our philosophy and inform ourselves, and were able to bring in various speakers to discuss their particular areas of expertise.

We planned an extensive submission, so different members of the group took on the task of preparing particular chapters.

I was elected as spokesperson at our late-November meeting, and we planned a series of media releases and interviews to promote discussion of the issues.

Just Defence was formally launched on 18 December 1985, and my first press release was issued to notify it.

After a break over Christmas, I started a schedule of weekly press releases over the next three months. A few of us would meet in Wellington on a Sunday morning to prepare a release about a particular aspect of our policy. Then a couple of us would go to the Parliamentary Press Gallery – no security clearance seemed to be needed at that time! We handed out copies to the reporters there and I would make a two-minute broadcast recording for Radio NZ and a 30-second one for the private radio consortium.

The media loved us! Newspapers and talkback radio thrive on controversy, and our material was controversial as well as being topical, and well researched and presented. The newspapers were flooded with correspondence about us and the radio chat shows were full of it. We were called 'muddled', 'ivory tower', 'Dad's Army advocates', and more. We also had supporters!
This was the front page of our first newsletter, published in January 1986, which informed people of the overall aims of the new organisation, Just Defence, and sought subscriptions. An initial print of 5000 was soon dispersed and a reprint of 8000 had to be ordered.
I was interviewed for an in-depth profile by several journalists, but the best result was this article by Roger Foley for the unfortunately short-lived national newspaper, New Zealand Times.
Meanwhile, Peter Winsley in our group had been gathering the contributions to our submission and giving them a preliminary editing. The first draft was circulated to the group and our advisers and patrons by 15 February 1986. Peter was also able to keep Minister of Defence Frank O’Flynn, and the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs and Defence Select Committee, Helen Clark MP, informed about our activities.

Kevin Hackwell (a former DSIR colleague) and I then incorporated comments and I did a further overall editing before it was circulated again for a final long scrutiny and discussion. I then finished it off and, having obtained an extension of the deadline, we were able to print and submit copies to the Defence Committee of Enquiry on 7 March.

At 40 pages, it was easily the most detailed and comprehensive the Committee received:

- It analysed potential threats, asserting that association with nuclear-armed nations, far from increasing our security, brought threats that otherwise would not exist for us.
- It advocated giving priority to positive peacemaking foreign policies, and working through the United Nations to promote comprehensive nuclear disarmament.
- It recommended establishing a South Pacific Island Security Community to promote cooperation in security matters, as well as maritime surveillance and fisheries protection in our region. We should follow up on South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone initiatives. We also should increase economic and educational aid to South Pacific nations.

Kevin Hackwell and I appeared before the Committee on 16 April 1986 to present our case and answer questions.

Below is what the Dominion (2 April 1986) made of our submission.
An advance copy of the Committee's report was sent to PM David Lange on 31 July 1986. His reply, sent on 4 August, noted the hard work put into its preparation and had ‘no problems’ with the parts putting together public submissions and conducting an opinion poll. However, he took exception to a criticism that he should not have made a major policy change – presumably to keep nuclear weapons out of New Zealand – before conducting an enquiry into it. Mr Lange reminded Mr Corner of the electoral mandate he’d received, and questioned the fairness, accuracy and objectivity of some of the Committee’s comments, particularly on the historic role of the ANZUS alliance between the US, Australia, and New Zealand.

We in Just Defence were perturbed about the influence of the military establishment, military clubs, and US officials on the report’s recommendations, which basically were to work with Australia until it became possible to reactivate a full military alliance with the USA.

We had, however, made a huge impact.

The public became much better informed and felt empowered to make further protests.

When the Government issued its Defence Review 1987, it emphasised that, ‘for the first time, we have adopted in formal policy terms the concept that the New Zealand armed forces will have the capability to operate independently’ in our region. We’d recommended this.

It meant a combined land/air/sea force instead of each part of the forces being a separate component of a larger allied force (possibly nuclear-armed) operating in a wider sphere.

In other words we would no longer take part in other people’s wars in other people’s countries.

In December 1985, David Lange had re-introduced the draft New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone, Disarmament, and Arms Control Bill. It was passed into law with support from all parliamentary parties except National, and came into effect on 8 June 1987.

It prohibited acquiring, stationing, and testing of nuclear explosive devices in New Zealand and its territorial waters, and visits by nuclear-powered ships. It also prohibited biological weapons.

It also implemented in New Zealand the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty 1985.

Later in 1987, at the general election, Labour was again returned to power, campaigning on its success in making New Zealand nuclear-free.

Having achieved our aims, both the Wellington/Hutt branch of SANA and Just Defence went into recess.

I took what was to be a greatly prolonged break in my anti-nuclear journey. My role with the media had been rather ‘like having a tiger by the tail’, as a friend put it!

Internationally, a chain of events reduced the tension over nuclear confrontation:

In December 1987, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty between the USA and Soviet Union was signed in Washington. Both countries began to eliminate these weapons.

On 9 November 1989, the Berlin Wall between East and West Germany came down. Germany became one nation again in the following year.

The Soviet Union began to disintegrate in 1990, and was finally dissolved by the end of 1991. The Cold War was at an end.

However, the French became a problem for nations of the South Pacific, resuming nuclear weapons testing at Moruroa in 1995. In New Zealand, in a move emulating that of PM Norman Kirk more than 20 years earlier, PM Jim Bolger sent a naval ship (unarmed), Tui, to accompany a flotilla of nearly 25 protest ships, led by the Greenpeace vessel Rainbow Warrior II.

Although SANA in Wellington had become inactive, the Auckland branch of SANA, the engineers in ESR, and especially the doctors in IPPNW carried on their anti-nuclear campaigning, taking it to the international stage.

Inspired by a speech by retired magistrate, Harold Evans, IPPNW sponsored a resolution supporting a World Court Project to declare nuclear weapons illegal, and it was adopted by IPPNW’s World Congress.

The New Zealand Government, however, dragged its heels over it, and when a National-led Government replaced the
Labour Government at the 1990 election, the project seemed doomed, However, the new PM, Jim Bolger, pledged to continue New Zealand’s nuclear-free policy.

After the French resumed nuclear weapons testing at Moruroa in 1995, Mr Bolger took New Zealand’s case to the World Court, joining with Australia and fourteen other governments. Numerous citizen groups including a Japanese delegation had submitted thousands of signatures to the World Court and Declarations of Public Conscience asserting that nuclear weapons violated international law.

On 6 July 1996, the World Court decided that ‘a threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, and in particular the principles and rules of humanitarian law.’

Nuclear weapons became illegal – a great victory!
Thirty years after New Zealand's nuclear-free legislation passed, on 8 June 2017, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hon Gerry Brownlee, moved in Parliament that ‘this House marks the thirtieth anniversary of our nuclear free legislation.’ He said that the symbolism of this legislation had become a ‘defining aspect of this country’s international reputation, and New Zealand continues to work for a nuclear-free world.’

A month later, the United Nations adopted a Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The New Zealand Government played a key role in the negotiations, and 122 nations voted in favour of the ban.

Let's hope the ban can be observed!

Many, many others have taken anti-nuclear activism much, much further than I ever could, and my anti-nuclear journey is over!