

Anti-nuke call gains support

By Mike Crean

A seed sown at a meeting in her kitchen six years ago has taken root internationally, Katie Boanas of Riccarton says.



Katie Boanas



Harold Evans

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The branches have spread to Geneva, where Ms Goanas attended the launch of the World Court Project last month. Response to her presence and that of New Zealand's other delegates showed New Zealand was held in high regard in anti-nuclear circles, Ms Boanas said.

In particular the work of former Christchurch magistrate Harold Evans had earned him the nickname "Godfather" in the peace and disarmament movement.

Ms Boanas gave a speech at the conference on mobilising civil society in support of the project which aims to gain United Nations' sponsorship of a request for an advisory opinion on the legality of nuclear weapons from the World Court.

It was at her kitchen table in 1986 that the idea of approaching the World Court was first mooted when Mr Evans met a visiting US specialist in international law, Dr Richard Falk, there.

The group reasoned that the use of chemical and biological weapons was regarded as illegal under international law so why should the same not apply to nuclear weapons?

The legal case was clear, Ms Boanas said. International conventions and treaties existed to preclude the use of weapons which caused needless suffering, could cause genocide to be committed, could violate neutral states and could cause severe damage to the environment. All of these criteria applied to nuclear weapons.

Early attempts by Mr Evans, Ms Boanas and others in New Zealand peace groups to enlist the support of the government nearly succeeded. The Labour Government of David Lange came close to sponsoring a resolution in the United Nations for a World Court ruling.

Support is growing with 24 New Zealand MPs of all parties, 12 mayors (including Vicki Buck), two former Prime Ministers, a former Governor-General and a wide range of prominent people behind it.

Christchurch people should know their voices were being heard and having an effect on the world stage, Ms Boanas said.