

NZ classroom skills at UN

NZPA

New York

A Tauranga teacher, Mr Alyn Ware, is in New York putting into practice the conflict resolution skills he has been teaching in peace studies courses in New Zealand schools.

He is the United Nations representative for the Gulf Peace Team, the group organising the camp in Iraq where people from around the world, including four New Zealanders, are living in tents and other makeshift accommodation working for a peaceful resolution of the Gulf crisis.

He has spent the fortnight in New York lobbying United Nations members on behalf of the peace camp supporters to promote options for a peaceful solution to the Gulf crisis through established United Nations mechanisms.

He said he had had a mixed response to his efforts, some representatives supporting the use of force against Iraq and others finding the prospect of war "absolutely ridiculous" without letting the trade embargo and other peaceful means be fully explored.

Many nations seemed set in Cold War thinking, still holding the view that force was needed to secure peace, he said.

Mr Ware heads the peace studies mobile unit which travels throughout New Zealand teaching conflict resolution skills and other peace issues.

When he first heard of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, one of his students asked him how he would put his theories into action to deal with it.

Wanting to contribute in some way, he jumped at the opportunity of working with the Gulf Peace Team when he heard about the camp project.

He first intended to become a member of the camp, but after discussions with organisers felt he could contribute most in the United Nations role.

He paid his own way to New York, with the help of contributions from supporters, "scrounged" office space across the road

from the United Nations building and is staying with "a friend of a friend" to keep costs down.

The same conflict resolution skills that helped to avoid fights between children or married couples could be applied to the Gulf conflict, he said.

"The principles are the same at the international level as they are at the domestic level."

"Putting all the blame on one party, even if they have done some wrong things, is just not going to work."

"You have to oppose the violence but you also have to look at the reasons behind it, look for a long-term solution to make it work."

Mr Jean Dreze, an adviser to the World Institute of Development Economics and one of the original peace camp members, said some members of the group had vowed to stay on even if war broke out.

On a brief promotional tour of the United States and Canada to raise money and public awareness of the peace camp, he said about 100 people would be living there when the latest batch of volunteers arrived just before the United Nations deadline of January 15 for Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait.

Volunteers going to the camp, about five hours' drive from Baghdad, are given two days of preparation to ensure they understand the reality of the situation and risks involved.

When he left the mood had been "excellent," but that was before the failed Baker-Aziz talks in Geneva which might have changed some people's feelings, Mr Dreze said.

The Gulf Peace Team is an independent group "accepting support from any source provided no political strings are attached."

"We as a team do not take sides in this dispute and we distance ourselves from all the parties involved, none of whom we consider blameless."

Tauranga man in peace bid

A TAURANGA man heads to New York next week in a bid to talk United Nations member countries out of war in the Gulf.

Alyn Ware has been chosen to represent the 70 members of an international peace-keeping force established on the Saudi Arabia-Iraq border.

In spite of Iraq and Western countries led by the US, shaping up for war, Mr Ware still thinks there is a chance for a peaceful solution.

"Collectively there's a chance. It's not just me. Peace groups in the US are working very strongly, lobbying the Senate. People all round the world are working behind the scenes lobbying for a peaceful solution."

There are still things that have not been tried, Mr Ware says.

Arbitration by the US, Arab League or UN, or taking the case on territorial rights to the World Court, are still avenues open to the major players, he says.

Mr Ware dispels the notion that the conflict is only over oil.

He says the oil in the Gulf states makes up only four to five per cent of the world's reserves. More to the point is that Gulf oil is cheap.

"Do you have a war, possibly killing hundreds of thousands of people and maybe ending in a chemical and nuclear war, just to keep the price of petrol down 10 or 20 cents a litre?"

People should expect to pay a little more for their oil and use less, he says.

Mr Ware says the conflict is deeper than just oil.

"My theory is the conflict is to do with the military and industrial machine needing to have some sort of war," he said.

Since the Cold War finished and dismantling of armies started, weapons and associated factories became scared, Mr Ware said.

"Hussein came along as a convenient enemy. It seems like a huge over-reaction by the US," he said.

Mr Ware condemns Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, but says it is nowhere near as cruel as the mustard gas Iraq used on the Kurds or the occupation of East Timor, neither of which caused such a strong reaction from the UN.

He says he has spoken to Chinese and Soviet diplomats to the UN and has faxed information to the other 13 member countries.

He expects to be in New York until mid to late January, by which time he hopes there will have been a peaceful solution.

The 70-strong peace team in the Gulf might be small but it represents millions of people around the world, Mr Ware says.

"It hopes to prevent a war by the moral power of non-violence; by the symbolic power of placing people between the armies in order to encourage a peaceful solution to the conflict."

Mr Ware asks Tauranga people to sign a petition being circulated calling for the New Zealand Government not to



MR WARE ... a bid to prevent Gulf war.

support the war.

He is a member of a well-known Tauranga family involved in the peace movement. His father, Gary Ware, the Tauranga co-ordinator for Amnesty International, his sister, Sue, has been on board the Greenpeace ship Rainbow Warrior, for more than two years.