

NZ will study nuke ruling for next step - PM

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The World Court ruling on nuclear weapons is being studied to determine how New Zealand can pursue complete nuclear disarmament, Prime Minister Jim Bolger said today.

Mr Bolger said New Zealand would have preferred a clear-cut decision that nuclear weapons were illegal, but the court's decision was still positive.

The Hague-based court ruled

last night that nuclear weapons were "the ultimate evil" and their use or threatened use in war should be outlawed. It remained undecided about the right to use nuclear weapons in the "extreme" circumstance of self-defence.

The World Health Organisation and the UN General Assembly had asked for a non-binding advisory opinion on whether international law permitted the threat or use of nuclear weapons.

Mr Bolger said New Zealand was the only Western nation which had voted at the UN for the ques-

tion to be referred to the World Court. "I said at the time there was an element of risk in that but the risk was worth taking."

Mr Bolger said the question now was whether the decision would help convince reluctant nations - such as aspiring nuclear powers Pakistan and India - to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

Labour leader Helen Clark said it was a landmark ruling, particularly given the conservative make-up of the World Court. She paid tribute to retired New Zealand magistrate Harold Evans, who first



Jim Bolger



Helen Clark

promoted the idea of seeking a judgment, and to New Zealander Alan Weir who worked for years on the project in New York.

That the use of nuclear weapons

for self-defence remained open should lead to a redoubling of efforts to see nuclear weapons banned altogether, she said.

Kate Dewes of the World Court project said supporters were exhausted but jubilant.

She was encouraged to hear Mr Bolger talk about total abolition. "For our Prime Minister to be using the language that we have used for decades - and for a conservative Government - I feel that New Zealanders have come of age."

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