



NEW ZEALAND

NUCLEAR FREE ZONE COMMITTEE

P.O. BOX 18541, CHRISTCHURCH 9, NEW ZEALAND

TELEPHONE: 889-816

October 1983.

How Mt Herbert became a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone. (N.W.F.Z.)

by Susan Snelgrove

Late June, 1983, John and I phoned some local people asking them whether they shared our wish that Mt Herbert join the growing number of N.W.F.Z's in N.Z. Some had not even heard of zones but all approved of the idea and agreed to take part in a mailing and follow-up 'visit' campaign of county councillors.

Early July: All councillors were sent a copy of a letter explaining that there was concern among people in their county at the rapidly growing Nuclear threat. An enclosure explained what the N.W.F.Z. movement was, with a progress report on it to date (26 councils at that stage). Also enclosed with the letter was a copy of Helen Caldicott's paper 'Preventative Medicine'. Councillors were told that over the next 6 - 8 weeks they might expect further literature and visits.

Mid July All councillors were personally contacted and our group met for the first time to share the councillors responses. It generally looked like we had a bunch of 'fence sitters'. We decided to try another mailing 'Realities of Nuclear War' by Professor North with follow up by our group.. A showing of the film 'The Last Epidemic' with two doctors was planned for mid-August.

Late July: We believed that the councillors would continue their 'fence-sitting'. Our one, strongly supportive councillor said the council had discussed our campaign at their meeting and would be prepared to meet our request if we could show support in the form of a petition. We held our groups second meeting with more than 20 people present, planned details of the film evening and decided to launch a petition immediately after the film.

Mid August Held a very successful film-evening with 60 people present. We sold some literature and had a good discussion. (Everyone in the county had been sent a notice of the film evening and petition a few days before)

We began door to door petitioning of entire county. Thirty petitioners took part. They were asked to seek signatures from persons 18 years or over who were normally resident or owned land in the county i.e. people who were eligible to register as voters.

Late August We presented our petition to the council meeting. Council opposed it because the signatures did not represent 50% of the electoral roll. (A large number of people on the electoral roll are non-resident rate-payers - owners of holiday baches.

Early Sept Our group met again and decided to obtain the necessary additional signatures by approaching the bach-owners. We managed to obtain their normal residential addresses from the county office.

Mid Sept: Over a period of ten days our petitioners approached an additional 280 people, 75% of whom signed.

Late Sept: We presented the additional signatures to the council meeting and sent 18 'observers' along too. With total signatures now representing almost 60% of the roll, the council had no choice but to unanimously declare Mt Herbert County a N.W.F.Z. - the 64th local body to become N.W.F, Pop 1,100

Early Oct Had a pot-luck dinner to celebrate.

The above is a chronological commentary of the facts. I am sure that between the lines the reader will be able to add the inevitable emotions - hope, disappointment, frustration, determination and finally delight!

MT. HERBERT NUCLEAR WEAPON-FREE ZONE ACTION GROUP

Dear

A group of your fellow rate-payers in Mt Herbert County would like to make the world a better place for our children by reducing the risk of nuclear war. To this end we took a petition to the council to have Mt Herbert declared a zone free from nuclear weapons. Our approach to the Council is set out in the enclosed letter.

To sample public opinion, we visited all houses in the County on Saturday 20th August, and sought an opinion from all residents of voting age. 445 people signed the petition, totalling 78% of those approached.

The council were not satisfied with this sample poll, but asked instead that more than 50% of all registered voters actually sign the petition. Since only about half the voters reside within the County, this has involved a postal approach.

Our actual request to the council is very simple and is set out below. I would be most grateful if you would sign it (together with your address) and return it in the enclosed stamped addressed envelope.

If you hold views opposed to the proposal, please cross it out and return this entire letter so a vote against the proposal can be recorded.

PETITION

To the Chairman and the Councillors, Mt Herbert County Council

We, the undersigned, urge your council to declare the Mt Herbert County a Nuclear Weapon -Free Zone.

Name:.....Address

Organised by the Mt Herbert Nuclear Weapon -Free Zone Action Group in the interests of World Peace .

**N-free
zone call**

County nuclear free

The Mt Herbert County Council's decision to declare the county a nuclear weapons-free zone has delighted peace campaigners.

A spokeswoman for the Mt Herbert Peace Group, Ms S. Snelgrove said the council's decision yesterday means Lyttelton Harbour is now surrounded by nuclear weapons-free zones.

The group had attempted to have the declaration made at last month's meeting, but the council refused to accept its petition until more than half the residents and ratepayers had signed it.

The petition presented at yesterday's meeting contained 654 signatures.

Ms Snelgrove said this represented 67 per cent of the residents and ratepayers

and 75 per cent of the people who had been approached.

Similar polls and petitions done in Rangiora and Lyttelton had given similar results, she said.

She hoped other councils which were asked to declare their territories nuclear weapons free would take note of these results and not put peace groups through unnecessary work.

Collecting the signatures had been an "enormous" task, even though Mt Herbert was the second smallest county in the South Island, she said.

It had cost the group \$200 and taken 300 man-hours to get the signatures required by the council.

"Mount Herbert is not going to have much effect on its own. However, it is important as part of an over-all movement."

She said that Canterbury peace groups would now consider whether to ask Lyttelton Harbour Council to declare the harbour a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

**Victory for peace 27/4/83
group at Mt Herbert**