

Physicians put their case on World Court Project

AN article printed on this page on October 13 discussed the attempts being made to have to the World Court in the Hague rule on the legality of nuclear weapons. A principal spur to this action has been the action taken before the World Health Assembly by the group known as International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War.

The planning officer for IPPNW is a New Zealander, Dr Erich Geiringer, who has responded to the original article. Dr Geiringer writes:

"Critics of the World Court Project consider it a waste of time: 'the Court may find against us; America would pay no attention to a 'favourable' judgment; disarmament is ruled by reality and not legality; and laws are useless unless they can be enforced'. How amazing then that the US Department of State has used every possible means to prevent the World Health Resolution from reaching the Court and is now plotting how to delay or prevent the Court proceedings.

"The fact is that the US is desperately anxious to avoid a Court appearance because there is no position which she could adopt which would not contradict American nuclear policy, which has remained unchanged since 1945. That policy is to perpetuate US nuclear weapons supremacy and to discourage, by any means, (bribe, embargoes, boycotts, sanctions, subversion, treaties, alliances and, if necessary, military action) other nations from successfully competing.

"Although reduced to a debtor nation, there is no weakening of the doctrine of 'nukes forever' within the Administration. On the contrary, regarding nuclear supremacy as their only remaining trump card, the determination to hang on to their nuclear deterrent has hardened. They understand however, the

impossibility of defending such a discriminatory doctrine in open Court.

"To argue that nukes are legal would fatally undermine her 'anti-proliferation' drive; while admitting that nukes are illegal would commit the US to nuclear disarmament which remains anathema to both the Pentagon and Foggy Bottom.

"America is pinning her hopes on an indefinite extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty which provides for a discriminatory regime.

This hope, that the rest of the world will consent to live under American nuclear dominance forever, received a setback at the recent G-7 Summit when Japan gave notice that she may not be willing to remain a non-nuclear power surrounded by nuclear heavyweights. But the idea of America deciding to give up its nuclear Deterrent is still an impossible psychological hurdle for Washington to overcome.

"If the nuclear weapons question were removed from the wheeling and dealing, the bribing, threatening and doubletalk, where it lives at present, and brought into the open day of the International Court, the dream, of riding on the back of the NPT into a nuclear pax Americana, would find a rude awakening.

"That is the political significance of the World Court Project. It will not bring nuclear disarmament by itself, but it would produce legal clarity, in a field in which the advocates of nuclear deterrents are still thriving on a diet of legal fog.

"The Court action is the logical first step to empower the non-nuclear nations of the world to insist on an international Treaty or Convention for the abolition of nuclear weapons."