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ON THE MARCH - Keeping up the pressure for a nuclear-free New Zealand, marchers in Lambton Quay remember Hiroshima Day.

# This is no time to abandon NZ's nuclear-free stance

**Right of reply.**  
An anti-nuclear spokesman's reply to an attack from the establishment.

By NICKY HAGER



CAMPAIGNER - Nicky Hager says France has reminded us the nuclear powers are still improving their weapons.

AS LONG as there have been people campaigning to rid the world of nuclear weapons, they have been accused by the military establishment of being anti-American, communist sympathisers and of deliberately trying to dupe the public.

This is untrue and insulting, but unfortunately, judging from Richard Jackson's Insight article (The Post, August 21), it is still going on today.

I have asked to reply because the article crossed the line from diatribe to dishonesty: Richard Jackson not only ascribed untrue motives to nuclear-free activists, he made up evidence to support his argument.

should be allowed back in our harbours to allow a return to Anzus. Peace activists, he argued, had fooled the public into believing they are unsafe.

In the 1970s nuclear-ship safety was a major concern, but not since. It was the National Government in 1991-92 which tried to define the issue strictly in terms of safety (with its nuclear propulsion safety review) - rather like saying French nuclear testing is all right so long as the atoll does not leak.

The peace movement's main concern was that safety was being used as a wedge to undermine the whole nuclear-free legislation. As usual, Jackson quoted Owen Wilkes who, with characteristic stridency, warned peace activists not to get distracted on to trying to argue about reactor safety.

To quote myself (accurately) from Peacelink at the time: "The main point about the 1991-92 nuclear propulsion review is that it gave the predictable answer to the wrong question. Most of the peace movement agree with Owen Wilkes

that public opposition was a result of myths propagated by the peace movement, including that American ships made New Zealand a nuclear target and that nuclear holocaust was inevitable.

Initially, in the mid-1970s, opposition to "nuclear warships" referred mainly to nuclear-powered warships.

After several years of public debate, the Government had decided against nuclear power stations for New Zealand.

Then, just a year later in 1976, the ports had been opened to nuclear reactors on American warships.

This is when the Wahine poster dates from. (The peace movement did reuse the poster briefly in 1991, hurriedly finding some resources to use when the issue of nuclear-powered ships suddenly arose again.)

Then, in early 1981, a 70-year-old actor was sworn in as President of the United States. Ronald Reagan immediately announced he was scrapping Jimmy Carter's human rights policies, resumed the Cold War against the Soviet Union and requested a 33 percent increase in the military budget.

Around the world, concern about nuclear weapons grew as a renewed nuclear arms race began between the superpowers, including new weapons such as US cruise missiles installed on European soil, for example Greenham Common Air Force base, and on warships in the Pacific.

Concern about nuclear warships shifted to being almost entirely about their nuclear weapons, and support for the campaign grew rapidly.

Reagan rhetoric about the Soviet Union being the "evil empire" of course filled people with fear. It all felt very real and worrying.

In 1984, Reagan joked on radio: "My fellow Americans, I am pleased to tell you we have signed legislation that would outlaw Russia forever - we begin bombing in five minutes."

Great sense of humour.

In the early 1980s, more and more New Zealanders decided they wanted their country to have nothing to do with the nuclear arms race. The obvious focus of protest was the nuclear weapons being brought to New Zealand on visiting warships.

COMMANDER Richard Jackson responds to Nicky Hager:

I stand corrected about the Wahine poster - the substitution of "would" for "could" in the phrase "if this ship had been nuclear powered thousands could have died" was inadvertent. I am pleased that Mr Hager agrees that nuclear-

power-free activists, he made up evidence to support his argument.

This really is strange behaviour and has no place in a respectable newspaper.

His first damning evidence in the article, showing the peace movement "deliberately distorting" US policy, is supposedly a quotation from me writing in Peacelink magazine.

But I did not write the words and they are not in Peacelink. Jackson invented them.

Is this what we should expect from the military's director of corporate relations policy, a public servant who is paid more than most members of Parliament?

I have written to the Chief of Defence Force asking him to insist that Commander Jackson either produce the quotation or make a public apology.

Jackson was moved sideways out of this job as a result of the article - losing the title but not the salary and the status. But, far from apologising, he has since allowed it to be published elsewhere.

The public would do well to keep Richard Jackson's attitude to facts in mind as they read the constant flow of articles he writes on behalf of the military about such things as the virtues of the Anzac frigates.

This was not the only example of misrepresentation in the August 21 article.

Misquoting the words on the anti-nuclear Wahine poster, which he described as a "brilliant piece of propaganda", he used the word "would" instead of "could", completely altering the meaning.

It is a bad legacy of decades in the Anzus alliance that there are many senior military personnel, like Commander Jackson, whose professional careers revolved around the alliance. They are still bitter and unwilling to accept that that the public and the governments they serve value Anzus less than they do, and the nuclear-free policy more.

Most of the article was an attack on the reasons for New Zealand's nuclear-free policy and the motives of its proponents. As someone involved in

## Commander answers the charges

In the same Peacelink issue a chronology of peace campaign events from September 1991 to December 1992 began with the words: "In late 1991 a change to the nuclear free policy looked very possible. But ... politicians lost enthusiasm for tampering with the nuclear legislation. It happened after thousands of letters and postcards, petitions, and publications, publicity tours, stunts and protests all round the country."

Honesty and accountability are the basis of my profession (I have been held accountable) and they are essential at Victoria University where I gained my masters degree in public policy.

But France has reminded the world that the nuclear powers are still building new and improved nuclear weapons.

I fear that if the current nuclear weapons powers continue to believe it is legitimate to possess nuclear weapons, other countries which feel threatened by those weapons are bound to develop them too.

This is no time to be abandoning our nuclear-free stand.

Nicky Hager is a spokesman for the Coalition Against Nuclear Weapons.

Commander Jackson claims that public opposition was a result of myths propagated by the peace movement, including that American ships made New Zealand a nuclear target and that nuclear holocaust was inevitable.

In the huge nationwide campaign many different politicians and groups made statements, but as spokesperson for the campaign in Wellington through the 1980s I know that those were not the arguments we used.

Certainly, many people believed that a nuclear holocaust was possible: besides the Cold War rhetoric, it is indisputable that the US was trying to achieve a "first strike" capability.

But if we had thought it was inevitable, why bother even trying to stop it? Most people involved in the campaign, including me, stayed away from arguments about being a nuclear target. It was an argument which applied more to the overseas nuclear-free movements.

I have always argued that the nuclear-free policy was not about trying to save New Zealand while the rest of the world blew up. Choosing to be nuclear-free was and still is primarily a strong, arid, concrete statement by New Zealanders to the world: withdrawing moral support for the nuclear weapon policies of our allies.

The aim was and is to embarrass and exert moral pressure on countries which believe it is legitimate to possess nuclear weapons, in the same way that international opinion is brought to bear on countries committing human rights abuses.

Nuclear weapons are grotesque weapons of mass destruction which any civilised country should be ashamed to possess. They are like a country having gas chambers in its arsenal.

Being in Anzus required New Zealand governments to remain silent, tacitly accepting the legitimacy of nuclear weapons as long as they were on "our side".

A major objective of Commander Jackson's article was that nuclear-powered warships