JESSIE Bounas was only four – and the eldest of three – when she instructed her mother to join the protest against the entry of a United States nuclear warship into Lyttelton port. "I'll mind the babies so you can stop the warship," she said.

Now, at nine, Jessie is an active peace campaigner herself. She often writes to Prime Minister David Lange and Minister for Disarmament and Arms Control, Fran Wilde – as do her sisters Ann (7) and Lucy (5).

"I want you to stop those weapons and bombs," wrote Lucy to Russell Marshall when he held the disarmament portfolio. She addressed the letter to the Minister of Bombs.

The Bounas household in Christchurch is a mecca for peace workers, academics and researchers from around the world. Mother, Katie, is one of New Zealand's most respected and dynamic peace workers. Last year she was the only woman in the New Zealand delegation at the United Nations special session on disarmament, held in New York. She lectures part-time in peace studies at Canterbury University and instigated the 1982 visit of the internationally-renowned peace campaigner Dr Helen Caldicott.

She has worked with the Department of Education on guidelines for peace education in schools, is on the Government-appointed Public Advisory Committee on Disarmament and Arms Control (Paacid) and is the South Island representative for the NZ Foundation of Peace Studies.

"I have a real passion for life, a love for the earth and its people," declares this remarkable 36-year-old woman, grabbing time for an interview between organizing a birthday party for Ann and flying to Wellington and Auckland on peace business.

"Many women involved in peace issues are deeply motivated by their own children and the children of the world. They care passionately about the whole world environment and the life of all people and species," she says.

Katie's daughters are very much part of her work. "They're grown up with it. They went on matches in uterus and when they were pre-schoolers. In a sense they've given me permission for this work. I couldn't be as fully involved without their support.

"There's quite an art in juggling the commitments of family with peace work. It doesn't always mean I'm a peaceful mother. I try to make a point of being with the children after school. I teach them the piano," she explains.

"When I was asked to attend the United Nations special disarmament session I had to ask them how they felt about me being away for five weeks. They supported me. They knew I was going to try to make the world a safer place."

Husband John is also supportive - "as I am of him. As a student at St John's Theological College in Auckland he helped found the Peace Squadron, a group which tried to blockade our harbours against nuclear warships. He and Katie went on a six-month peace studies course together at Bradford University, in England. He is now the managing director of a stationery firm.

Katie is currently involved in a movement which wants nuclear weapons declared illegal. Initiated by a Christchurch retired magistrate, Harold Evans, it has gained support from prominent jurists throughout the world.

Paacid has asked our Government to propose to the United Nations General Assembly this year that an advisory opinion be sought from the International Court of Justice on the legality of nuclear weapons.

Many jurists believe that the use of nuclear weapons is "contrary to the principles of international humanitarian law ... a crime against humanity and a violation of the right to life."

Katie has been asked to go.

Katie did a lot of the groundwork for the proposal when she was at the United Nations disarmament session.

"It was asked by Paacid to explore the issue with other delegates. I spoke to Swedes, Canadians, Indians, Danes, Norwegians, Irish, Americans, Brazilians, Indonesians and

Promoting peace is a passion for even the youngest members of the Bounas household in Christchurch, as Glenys Bowman reports.
"I’LL MIND THE BABIES SO YOU CAN STOP THE WARSHIP"

NEW Zealand broadcaster Judy Lessing (blonde woman second from right) was one of several New Zealanders who took part in this nuclear-free demonstration in the United States. Katie Bouma is on the right (in sunglasses).

shying away from any direct pol-
itical action. It took a piece of
music to trigger off a whole new
direction for her.

"I was teaching music at Epson Girls' Grammar in Auckland. One day I played a piece of

music called Threnody to the Vici-
tims of Hiroshima. The kids
didn't understand it all. They
thought it sounded terrible. Who
were these victims anyway? I was
23 -- and I couldn't tell them.

"I felt they should know why
this song of lament had been writ-
ten and found the information. It
totally changed my life. That was
the beginning of my voyage of
discovery about weapons and the
state of the world. I knew I had
to do something to stop the mad-
ness," she says.

During the time she and John
spent at Bradford, Katie attend-
ed a women's disarmament con-
ference in Vienna as a New
Zealand delegate. When they
returned to New Zealand, Katie
was pregnant with Jessie. "I felt
New Zealand was far enough re-
moved from the nuclear complex
to be able to create a vision of a
safer world," she recalls.

In Christchurch she met with
others sharing her concerns and
a peace collective was formed. At
the time -- 1979 -- there were
many peace groups throughout
the country. In 1981 the national
magazine Peacelink was launched
and Peace Movement Aotearoa
established to be a networking
body between the different
groups.

The Bouma's home became a
peace office, issuing peace let-
ters galore, sending literature, bad-
ges and stickers, writing, organising
meetings. Their second daughter
was born.

Katie and other women kept in
contact with women peace-activists
at Greenham Common in England.
They showed videos, talked to
kindergarten groups with their
babies on their hips. The move-
ment spread. Nucleu f ree streets,
neighbourhoods, councils and
zones were formed -- all the
grassroots activity that generated
the support leading to our nuclear
free legislation.

Helen Caldicott's visit brought
a whole new impetus and respec-
tability to the peace movement.
Professional groups became in-
volved. There was no turning
back now.

Katie will never forget Helen
Caldicott's visit -- for more than
the obvious reason. "Christ-
church was her first stop. I was
due to pick her up from the air-
port and bring her back here --
but I went into labour instead!

"Those days the Peace Move-
ment has a lower profile. Is it
feeling okay? "It certainly hasn't
died," replies Katie. "It's true we
feel we have achieved a lot -- the
South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone,
our nuclear-free legislation and
our disarmament initiatives at the
United Nations -- but there's still
lots to do.

"We're now looking at Black
Birch observatory near Blenheim
to establish whether it's con-
travening our nuclear free legis-
lation by providing information
which could be used to target
nuclear weapons. We're also con-
cerned about New Zealand buy-
ing frigates and whether these are
the most appropriate form of
defence. We are a South Pacific
nation. We need to challenge the
whole nuclear policy of deterrents
and question any collaboration
with the nuclear system."

She sees the nuclear arms
reduction agreement between the
United States and the Soviet Uni-
ions as "just a tiny, tiny step.
There are so many holes in the
agreement," she asserts.

She's encouraged by the num-
ber of peace studies courses at
New Zealand universities, poly-
technics, WEA offices and
teachers' colleges.

Peace, she believes, is the ulti-
mate environmental issue. "Stopp-
ing nuclear testing and the dump-
ing of nuclear waste, stop-
ning the mining of uranium and
accidents in nuclear plants has to
be on at least a par with the green-
house effect or the hole in the
ozone layer."

She's adamant that women
must strive for their say in deci-
sions affecting world peace.

"Women and children are more
than half the world's population.
We have a right to 50% of the
decision making.

"We need to inform ourselves
on the issues and ask our partners
to take on some of the responsi-
bility for childcare so we are more
free for decision-making roles.
We must keep reminding men
that we have different ways of de-
ing things and different
priorities.

Motherhood, she believes, helps,
not hinders. "Being a mother of
three children under four pre-
pares you for anything. You can
take on the world!"

Apart from some expenses, all
Katie's work is unpaid. "Women
in my position have the luxury of
being able to choose to earn or
not. It's a privileged position, es-
specially at a time when many
people are living at subsistence
level.

"I feel I have reaped many
benefits from the system -- and
I want to use those to try and im-
prove the system. My work is a
gift -- but one I can afford. It's
my choice.

"New Zealand has a strong his-
tory of both men and women
peacekeepers. I believe our
nuclear free stance has generated
hope throughout the world."