

# World Court credibility (Wellington) Evening Post 17.11.95 'on line over nuke issue'

The World Court will lose all credibility if it attempts to sidestep in its deliberations on the legality of the use or threatened use of nuclear weapons.

So says World Court project campaigner Katie Dewes, who has just returned from hearings at the International Court of Justice in the Hague.

She said she was reasonably confident the court ruling, expected early next year, would declare their use or threatened use illegal.

She came to this view after seeing the reaction of the judges as they listened to the moving presentations by the mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

"If they listen to their consciences and international law there is no way they can come up with a decision that it is legal," said Ms Dewes, who has been working on the campaign since it was initiated by retired Christchurch magistrate Harold Evans in 1986.

Ms Dewes said it was amazing to sit in the court after talking about it for nine years. It was the biggest case the court had heard and the first time citizens evidence had been accepted. There was a "sense that we were witnessing history in the making".

She was also conscious of the key role New Zealanders had played in getting the cases heard, by successfully lobbying for the World Health Organisation and the United Nations General Assembly to refer the legality issue to the World Court.



**FRIENDLY FORCES** - Attorney General Paul East and New Zealand Ambassador to the Hague Hillary Willberg greeting World Court Project supporters outside the Palace of Justice in the Hague.

Ms Dewes, who went to the Hague with Maori elder Pauline Tangiora, said it was a wonderful moment when Attorney General Paul East greeted project supporters as they held their nuclear-free banner outside the Palace of Justice.

Credit had to be given to the Government for listening to its people.

She said a lot of pressure was put on States not to make submissions and Colombia, Nauru and Guyana pulled out of making oral submissions. However, strong cases were put by

Egypt, Iran, Qatar, Mexico, Malaysia and the Philippines.

There was a moving statement by Marshall Islander Lijon Eknilang, whose people were exposed to fallout from United States atmospheric tests on Bikini Atoll.

Ms Eknilang, who experienced seven miscarriages, described the "jellyfish" babies, born with no bones and transparent skin and who died within a day or two of birth, abnormal pregnancies, and women who gave birth to what looked like strands of purple grapes.

Ms Dewes said France put forward a contradictory and rambling statement, warning that the court could not challenge the legality of nuclear deterrence because this was a cornerstone of French and European security. France also annoyed the judges by demanding an extension of time to present its case.

The hearing did not mark the end of the anti-nuclear campaign. The focus would now shift to the abolition of nuclear weapons, said Ms Dewes.