INTERVIEW WITH MAIRE LEADBEATER ON 21 MAY 2004
INTERVIEWED BY SARAH GREENAWAY
Part of the Christchurch Peace City Oral Archive Project
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Maire Leadbeater, credit to Gil Hanly

SARAH: Okay, the first question is, what inspired or motivated you to become involved in the peace movement?

MAIRE: It's kind of hard for me to remember that, because I grew up in a family where, sort of, peace and justice issues were kind of part of the environment so, sometimes it seems to me like I've always been involved in these sorts of issues, but I think particularly, if I think back to my teenage years, that was a time in the world of quite a bit of concern about peace and war issues because it was the time of things happening like the Cuba Missile Crisis, and a time when I think people did feel that the possibility of nuclear war was very high so, as a teenager becoming aware of what was going on in the world, it seemed natural to be taking a stand for peace against those kinds of threats and dangers.

SARAH: So what kind of activities were you involved in as a teenager?

MAIRE: As a teenager? Well, we had a peace group at my high school, Linwood High School and I got involved in the early days of the Youth Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. We used to meet at the Friends Meeting House in Christchurch and, you know, planned to change the world and we went on lots of demonstrations. We did the usual things of - usual run of things, having pickets, demonstrations, and a number of quite exciting lengthy marches back in those days, because the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in New Zealand was inspired by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in Britain, and that got going really with a series of Easter marches which were four-day marches, marching to their nuclear weapons establishment at Aldermaston and we kind

of copied that formula here only instead of marching to a weapons facility we marched on Parliament. So those were pretty interesting things to be doing, and I guess another thing, again, I think we probably copied it off some other campaign, but we had campaigns on the beach. We went to some of the really attractive and popular beaches in Nelson at summer to kind of campaign there in a family-friendly sort of way. That was good fun.

SARAH: And what kind of things did you do in the beach campaign?

MAIRE: Oh, right, we did a whole range of things, actually. We used to have puppet shows for the young children, so we were sort of reaching out to people by, I guess, sort of doing things that we thought were life-affirming as well as, at the same time, sort of trying to convey a message that peace and disarmament was urgent and, well, I remember we enjoyed doing it. How much support we gathered that way I'm not quite so sure, but we – I think we must have done, because it was fairly popular and we got a bit of publicity out of it.

SARAH: And was that developed through the youth group—

MAIRE: Yes, this was very much a Youth Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament initiative. We got together across the country, if you know what I mean. People came from the Youth Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament branches in other parts of the country, so it was quite a mixing point too.

SARAH: And how many people were involved approximately?

MAIRE: In that sort of activity? Ooh, might have been twenty or thirty of us, I guess, yeah. I've still got some of the old photos from those times - it was a good, reasonably big, crowd there.

SARAH: Great, okay. In particular relation to your mother, what kind of impact do you think she had on you and your involvement—

MAIRE: Oh, a pretty big one, really, because my commitment to the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament was pretty much inspired by her, I guess, because she was one of the people who first founded the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, if you like. She wasn't so much a sort of a key office holder, but she was certainly one of the, you know, founding members of that and she was very committed to it and it was something - something that we did together in a way, too, really. We - the youth activities, of course, she wasn't part of, but the broader marches we did together. It brought us closer together, yeah.

SARAH: Can you just tell me a little bit about her involvement at the setting up of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament?

MAIRE: Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament? Well, it's all really the same thing. If you go back to those times in the late 50s, early 60s, then there was that huge feeling that the survival of humanity was at stake, if you know what I mean, the…you know, the superpowers and the conflict between the superpowers and the militaristic stance they were taking, the huge build up of nuclear weapons, the testing in the atmosphere, it was a pretty scary time, really. And my mother had been involved in many, many other social justice issues, but she felt that unless we pulled back from the brink, what was the point of campaigning on all the other issues? We might not be around – we might not have a world to, you know, to develop all those other issues, so she saw it as an urgent priority, and she – she'd come from a left-wing perspective. She'd been involved in the Communist Party earlier on, she was some years out of that, but I think she really appreciated the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament because it was a melting-pot, that there were people there from various different backgrounds, who - different values. There were people there from more religious backgrounds, for example, and yet she felt a tremendous affinity with these people because they were sharing that same goal and I think that was very much the case too, really, that we all did come at things from different points-of-view, but we could unite around that crucial goal.

SARAH: So you said there is [sic] people from religious backgrounds…

MAIRE: Mm.

SARAH: What other kinds of backgrounds?

MAIRE: Oh, well, I guess there were more sort of hardened leftie types as well, but yes, the strong element…of the people of faith at that stage. You know, there were a number of church leaders who were very prominent in the campaign and people from the Society of Friends. They were very much a backbone of the movement, young people, old people, unionists, all kinds.

SARAH: Okay, and as a family, how did you – you might have already answered this, so… How did you support one another and work with each other and learn from each other in relation to maybe peace issues?

MAIRE: Oh, we also had differences within the family, too, so we didn't always see exactly eye-to-eye on some of these issues. I remember some quite vigorous arguments with my Dad at that stage. Yes, I don't know -I suppose our family was one where debate and political issues were always discussed. You didn't have to agree with each other, necessarily.

SARAH: Do you want to say a little bit about the arguments with your Dad or [indistinct]--?

MAIRE: (Laughs) Oh, well, my Dad was still in the Communist Party at that stage and I guess he…I mean, the Communist Party went through all these different changes of sometimes being close to China and sometimes being close to the Soviet Union, but I

developed the feeling that nuclear weapons were wrong and it didn't matter who had them, but I guess Dad didn't always agree with that point of view. I'm sure he did towards the end of his life, but at that stage, maybe not.

SARAH: How would you describe your commitment to peace over the years and what has this meant for you?

MAIRE: Hmm, that's a long, long question after so many years, isn't it? The – I suppose the sort of progression that's happened with me is sort of going from pure peace issues to becoming more involved in a broader international understanding, and perhaps more involved in third world solidarity movements…is sort of the direction I took, but that kind of grew out of the anti-nuclear commitment in a way because when we were campaigning on anti-nuclear issues we sort of had to become aware that in our region, the region of the Pacific, the – it's impossible to…became impossible to separate the nuclear issue from issues of colonialism, because you know, you started to get involved in issues of French testing and how were the French managing to test in our region? Well, because they were still pursuing, you know, their colonies in the Pacific, and that brought us in touch with sort of movements in Tahiti who were also very concerned about the impact of the nuclear testing on their environment, and so eventually, of course, that lead to a new movement which was the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Movement, which was concerned as much with the issues of de-colonization in the Pacific as with the nuclear issues, so that sort of developed a bit of a progression with me. And then ultimately if you sort of bring it on to the late 80s, early 90s, I became involved in…well, at one stage we had a very strong Kanak solidarity movement, which was working in solidarity with the Kanak people in New Caledonia. We had – we became involved in Philippines issues and then, of course, around about the late 80s, early 90s, I got involved in the East Timor movement and that kind of swallowed a huge amount of my time and focus and energy for over a decade, so - but had a good, relatively good, outcome, I guess.

SARAH: [Indistinct] so I guess the peace is central to all of those…

MAIRE: Yeah, well, you know, there's the whole phrase: "No peace without justice," which is true, I think, you know. Until there is a fairer distribution of the world's resources and until everybody has a fair go, it is going to be a difficult thing to achieve peace. Peace and justice are inextricably linked.

SARAH: Can you tell me a little bit about what - some of the things you were involved in as part of the Kanak solidarity?

MAIRE: Yes, that's, of course, a long time ago now, but it was during that period in - around about the mid-1980s when the prospects for independence seemed more imminent than they would be even today. I mean, the people in New Caledonia are on a path towards a referendum, but it's a very long, drawn-out path at the moment and at that stage their campaign had a greater urgency and they were, I think, really in a situation of – where they needed some recognition of the struggle they had with the…French

Colonialism was a very oppressive force, at that stage, anyway. They were not able to express their desire for independence without coming up against extreme violence at certain times. So it was more a matter of, you know, trying to bring a bit of an awareness to what their issues were and what their hopes were and…it's a difficult one because I think the - New Caledonia's our, actually one of our very, very closest neighbours, but because of the differences, perhaps, in language it's not as well understood here as - its issues are not as well understood here as perhaps they ought to be. Probably still the case, really.

SARAH: And so what did you do as part of that solidarity?

MAIRE: Oh, well, we had – it was kind of caught up really with the issues of testing still. We were kind of combining our protests against French nuclear policies with trying to bring awareness to their - more oppressive side of their colonial policies. Some of it was fundraising, actually. We were helping to support the possibility of a Kanak radio station at that stage, which still exists, and just trying to generally bring a bit of attention to some of the… at that stage there were some pretty awful massacres in the 1980s when many Kanak people were actually killed just for campaigning for independence, killed by the settler population.

SARAH: And so did you do sort of media advocacy or—

MAIRE: Yes, media advocacy, demonstrations, beating a path to the French Consulate in Auckland was one of the things we did. I don't think it exists anymore.

SARAH: Okay, what have been some of the highlights of your peace work?

MAIRE: I think the most exciting time in the anti-nuclear movement was when there was a prospect that the Labor government was going to go back on its commitment. It was elected in 1984 and – on a snap election, around the nuclear issue – and then followed a whole period of tremendous pressure from the United States to back down on that and beginning of 1985 there was a prospect that the government would allow the visit of a nuclear weapons-capable vessel, the United States' Buchanan, and, it was a strange time, actually, because it was all around about January…it's a funny thing about the anti-nuclear movement, a lot of things happened around about January, warship visits, all sorts of things seemed to come in, under the Muldoon government, in particular, around about Christmas, but anyway. This time it was whether or not the government would accept the United States frigate, the Buchanan, and there was enormous public pressure to say no. The theme of that was: "If in doubt, keep it out", and I think that was an extremely important stand because had we allowed the USS Buchanan to come, even though it was a clapped-out old frigate and probably didn't have any nuclear weapons on it, I think that would have been the thin end of the wedge, and it would have opened the way to all sorts of compromises with our policy, and what the peace movement did was multi-faceted. There was huge lobbying went on, in Wellington, in particular. They sort of organized a huge lobbying campaign towards government and masses of telegrams and phone calls and representations at that level, but in Auckland we decided that the thing to

do was to get the public out on the streets and we did organize a march in Auckland. I think it was the 30th of January from memory, I might be one or two days out, and we announced it just two days in advance. We were a bit lucky, we had a bit of support at that stage, I think, from the media, or at least the media was more open to, you know, talking about the fact that we were planning a march, and 10,000 people turned up. It was just tremendous, and it was an unusual time, it was a mid-week march. Everything about it should have meant that it would have been a bit difficult to get the numbers, but they just came out on the streets in force, and I personally think that was really more important in terms of what mattered in terms of making New Zealand nuclear-free than the law or, you know, anything else, because it sort of held the government to their commitment and it was a real display of people power. You wouldn't know that when you read the books that the politicians write, you'd think they did it all by themselves, but it was that mobilization that made a huge difference, I think.

SARAH: Okay, and so do you think it was just that there was a heightened public awareness or were there particular things that happened—

MAIRE: Oh, I just think that showed where people had got to in this country. They wanted New Zealand nuclear-free and they were prepared to stand up for it and that's how they showed it. You know, I mean, they showed it in all sorts of other ways too. There were people who went out on the harbours when the nuclear warships visited with their frail little boats, standing up to the warships, the - all the marches that took place every time a nuclear powered or nuclear-armed vessel came into port. Those were all really powerful demonstrations of public feeling, and that was like, to me, a sort of a climax of it, really, that so many people would turn up at such short notice. It was great. Yeah, to me those – the highlights are doing things with other people, all the mobilizations that took place, be they big or large were really important and I, you know, really value the fact that I was part of it.

SARAH: And are you still in contact with the people that you were working with…

MAIRE: Oh, many of them, yes, many of them, yes. That particular event, that I've just been talking about, my co-conspirator in that venture, if you like, was a man called Tom Newnham who's known to people perhaps for his anti-apartheid record as much as anything, but he and I worked closely together on the Campaign for Nuclear-Disarmament as well, and I value Tom Newnham tremendously, because he had fantastic ideas for campaigns and he usually turned out to be right. You know, we – one of the things we did in the anti-nuclear movement was develop a thing we called the Nuclear Weapons-Free Register and it was a lobbying tool that we used going into elections where we went to candidates and got their personal signed pledge to support a nuclear weapons free – a Nuclear Weapons Free South Pacific, I think we phrased it, and opposition to the visits of nuclear warships. We kept it fairly simple and basic, but the idea of that was that you got them pledged and signed and sealed before they got into government (laughs), and they tended to resist it a bit because politicians say, "Well, this is our party's policy," but we wanted a personal signed pledge, and I think having got it was quite a significant factor because then you did have something and later on, if there

was any wavering, "Well, no, this - she signed this pledge". Really did make a difference and we've used that – well, I've sort of used that tactic again since with the solidarity movement work too. For the East Timor movement we also developed an East Timor register where we got people to sign that they would actually support a change in New Zealand policy on East Timor, that they would support self-determination, that they would support an end to military ties and so on, and tried to get parliamentarians to sign up to that too. Difficult, but I still think it's a good exercise.

SARAH: And did they – did many sign up to…

MAIRE: Oh, we had trouble – we had trouble with that with the Labour Party actually, because some wouldn't, yeah, no, some wouldn't, not because they necessarily didn't support the register but the – you know, "the Party said, not quite the right thing," or something, so yeah, it was – it was quite hard to get them to do it.

SARAH: And were you involved in any of those, like, nuclear-free streets—

MAIRE: Oh, yes, yes, yes—

SARAH: [Indistinct]

MAIRE: That was a good campaign. That goes sort of way back to the early 80s. Before we had a real prospect of getting a nuclear-free New Zealand, we decided to sort of go back a step or two and if we can't get a nuclear-free New Zealand then we can maybe start with something smaller and so it started originally with declaring your own home or your, your street as you say, or - building up to your local council and declaring that, getting that to make a nuclear-free declaration, and that worked, actually. It was amazing. It caught on around the country and the Nuclear Free Zone Peace-Making Association down in Christchurch, they did a huge job by keeping track of councils that had gone nuclear-free and they used to put out New Zealand maps with it marked in, just which parts have gone nuclear-free and we had most of the country declared nuclear-free, bit by bit, before we ever got to the actual legislation that made us all nuclear-free. It was a good exercise. We went to councils, we were going to Auckland City Council at least twice before they would agree, and doing our submissions and so forth.

SARAH: But they did eventually?

MAIRE: They did eventually. Yes.

SARAH: And there's a question about – when did you begin to record sound bites for Radio New Zealand?

MAIRE: Oh, gosh. (Laughs) I remember that a little bit, actually, because when we first decided to be serious about media work it was bloomin' hard, you know, because – to get sort of recognized, and I think it just required huge persistence in terms of doing media releases and…we were discouraged. A lot of people in the media said, "Oh, this is

not…You know, your press releases are never going to be effective, just stick to writing letters to the paper," or whatever, but I thought that we had a right to have our voice out there in the arena as much as any other interest group and just persisted, really. I, you know, learnt the hard way. Somewhere along the line I think I went to media workshops, but – realized I'd probably been doing lots of things wrong with media releases, but…just sheer persistence was the only answer.

SARAH: So have you got any tips for—

MAIRE: For any new campaigns that want to—

SARAH: you know, how to make – how to be successful in terms of media advocacy, sort of things or—

MAIRE: That's just my one memory, it's just absolute persistence and not being put off or down-heartened by putting out media releases or trying to get the media to take an interest and not getting anywhere, you know, because it can be very disheartening. You can feel very sort of, hmm, demoralized, if you know what I mean. If you put a lot of work into trying to get a statement into the media and failing it can be quite demoralizing, but the way I remember it was just sort of trying to fight that feeling, of being demoralized or put down or, you know – journalists being higher – high and mighty or whatever, and just keep going. That's the only answer I can think of, really. I mean, there are tricks about what makes a more presentable media release, but – and you can learn that by going to classes or reading books or whatever, but just, yeah, I think that would be my main advice: just don't be put off, if you think it's important, keep on.

SARAH: Okay, well, I asked you about your highlights before and what you're just saying now…

MAIRE: Mm.

SARAH: I was just wondering what was your – are there any low points associated with your peace work?

MAIRE: Oh, okay, low points. Well, bit of a low point right at the moment, isn't it, I suppose, to be reading the news and watching the news about the disgraceful things that are happening in Iraq at the moment and to realize how some of the things that I think we gained and some of the civil liberties and human rights that we've gained over the years are very much at threat now, I think, given the War on Terror. It's a very frightening time to be living through too, I thought. I don't know, it gives me, you know, a great deal of sorrow to realize how much huge suffering there is in Iraq and Afghanistan, but the optimism is always that the opposition is also growing all the time, isn't it? That people around the world are starting perhaps to realize how wrong and immoral that war is, and I hope, you know, that New Zealanders too will see that us having any role in it at all is wrong and we've got an issue there with our government currently for supporting that war.

SARAH: Has being actively – has your involvement with the peace movement prevented you from pursuing other goals or directions around that you might have taken [indistinct]?

MAIRE: Ah, well, I suppose it has. I could have been – I could have developed my career in different ways, but I don't feel any loss, you know, I've – in my professional life I'm a social worker, and I've always stayed pretty much at the coalface there. I've never sought much in the way of advancement for many years now, but I enjoy being at the coalface anyway, so I guess it's not much of a loss. It's the contact with the people that I enjoy. Had I pursued my career I'd have gone up into management or something and I'd have missed a lot of satisfaction so no, I don't think so. I've got unfulfilled ambitions, as most people have. There's so many directions you can take in life, aren't there? I'd have liked to have perhaps found more time for writing, really, and I've found it difficult to do that because it's quite a conflict, I find, to be involved in anything that involves organizing, and trying to do writing, you know, it's a huge conflict. I, you know, that's one of my struggles.

SARAH: And is there anything else you talked about, you know, with your unfulfilled ambitions? Is that mainly your writing or—

MAIRE: Yes, I guess that's the main one, and it feels strong with me at the moment because there are some things that I have - I'm getting to the stage in life where I want to record some experiences and some insights, if you like, that are, yeah. They're things that probably – you know, they are something I want to contribute, to get them recorded and I'm trying to make time in my life to do that now.

SARAH: So what are you planning to write about?

MAIRE: Oh, I'm at the moment trying to write about the experiences that we had with – in the East Timor movement. I'm not so much writing a history of the movement, although that comes into it, as trying to look at the direction in terms of New Zealand foreign policy and what that – what lessons might be learnt from that for, perhaps, for other issues, for other foreign policy issues, so that's…

SARAH: Do you want to say a little bit about that now, or—

MAIRE: Ah, maybe later might be a better time for that. It's still—

SARAH: In development?

MAIRE: (Laughs) Yes, still in development stage.

SARAH: [Indistinct]

MAIRE: My family would probably tell you that some things suffered at certain times because of my involvements and commitments, but that's always a hard struggle, to strike the right balance between public life and personal life and I don't know that anyone ever gets it exactly right. I think that I have to probably confess that at times I think maybe I got it a bit wrong, you know, yeah?

SARAH: Okay, do you want to say a little bit about how you feel about that, or—

MAIRE: No, I can't say anything more about that, I think, than that, that it just is a hard balance sometimes, once you do get involved in struggles that – things seem very intense and important and if there's also commitments to family it just is hard sometimes to keep things in the appropriate balance, and I've got two grown children who tell me that I sometimes got the balance wrong. I can – have to accept that.

SARAH: And are they involved in peace issues and…

MAIRE: No, not really. I had – they're both involved in teaching, really…yeah, they're both contributing in that way.

SARAH: So what has sustained and supported you in the peace work?

MAIRE: Close friends and family. The solidarity movement work brings you into contact with people all round the world. Well, so did the anti-nuclear movement to a certain extent, and that's a enriching, lovely experience, really, to meet people that you've got something basic in common with even though, you have, you know, huge differences, different languages, cultures, upbringings, but coming together sharing a commitment. I think it's a pretty special opportunity there that you have, and - going to peace conferences and meeting fellow activists in the East Timor movement and now part of the Indonesia Human Rights Committee, meeting people working for justice in Aceh, for example. It's, yeah, I feel quite sort of privileged in a way, really, that - the chance to meet people that, in that way…the things that you really share in common despite the gulf of completely different cultural and language backgrounds.

SARAH: Do you want to say about anybody in particular that you've met through your peace work that's made a particular impact on you or—

MAIRE: Ooh, heaps of people over the years, yeah. Hmm, [indistinct] come to mind. Oh, yeah, I was involved with a Fiji Coalition for Democracy for several years in the late 80s too. I had a huge admiration for Dr Timoti Bavandra, the leader of the deposed government in 1987. He sadly died a few years later. I think that was a great loss to the world, really. I found him someone who really represented multi-racialism, who sort of embodied it in everything he said and did, and was able to bridge a gap between the different populations in Fiji in a way that no-one else since has seemed to be able to do, which I think [indistinct] …so I kind of treasure that memory of getting to know him a little bit. I wish he was still around.

SARAH: And did you travel to East Timor?

MAIRE: I did. I traveled to East Timor in 1999, in April, so it was a pretty tense time. That was at the sort of beginnings of the worst of the militia violence at that stage actually, at that stage. It was a short visit and I didn't go beyond Dili, because I was advised, perhaps, best not to, so I didn't. Yes, it was a tough one because at that stage you couldn't help but be aware things were going very badly wrong and the – one of the massacres had just taken place, just I think, the day before I arrived. The Liquica massacre and the victims, several of the victims, had been transported down to Dili and I was able to go and meet them and everybody I met in East Timor gave me the message that the international community needed to be far more pro-active than they were, and that it was no use waiting any longer. They really needed the international community to put peacekeepers in at that point, in April, and that was a very strong message which I had to bring back with me, but of course the New Zealand government and every other western government still wasn't ready to take that on board and we had to go through another six or seven months of massacres and killings and ongoing violence. It's still mind-boggling, really, thinking about that year because it was just so blatantly obvious what was happening. The UN were there and they were being told what was happening, they were in a position to see what was happening and yet they still sort of – we still maintained this fiction that somehow Indonesia was the right body to be responsible for security, with the ballot coming up and it was completely obvious to anybody with two eyes, that that was not going to work. So we just sort of, you know, we sleep-walked our way through that and hundreds, probably thousands, of people died as a consequence. I think it's still a shameful period in human history, really, and it's all very well that we did the right thing ultimately, by sending in an international force, but it's a pretty black chapter, really.

SARAH: So how did you cope with that knowledge and the awareness that nothing was being done?

MAIRE: I kept screaming and shouting about it for the next six months, I suppose (laughs). That was all we really could do, you know. People all around the world were doing the same thing, you know, just right - until right at the very end, a time when the APEC conference was being held there. You know, there was a sense of really, frustration and desperation and being, you know, finally, I think, you know, and – but that was the right thing to do, I think, because finally the international community's voice was so loud that no-one could pretend any longer, and then things did start to change, and, you know, I think that was the…East Timor to me is a clear example of where the international movement has made a difference. It wasn't solely the international movement. I think it was the fact that there were changes that happened in Indonesia and it was the fact that the East Timorese people, obviously, never gave up. That's a, you know, really inspiring story in itself, that despite all that 24 years of horror they never gave up, and it's, you know, really amazing. But the international solidarity movement I think was one of the factors that did finally make a difference.

SARAH: Okay, so – and are you still part of that—

MAIRE: Not really, no, not particularly. I still follow issues in East Timor and I – we've established a new group, the Indonesia Human Rights Committee, and that really came about because a lot of people said to us - well, we were campaigning for East Timor – "Well, it's all very well campaigning for East Timor, but the same sort of thing is happening in other parts of Indonesia as well, you know, West Papua and Aceh and why aren't you working on those issues?" And when it perhaps became possible to pick up those other issues we decided that we'd start a group which was in a position to look at those issues, but one of the things about East Timor that I think still is relevant is the fact that there's been no justice, no human rights accountability, and that, I think, is something that's important. It's important to the international community that crimes against humanity don't go forgotten and it's also important for the future of Indonesia that there is some accountability because the simple – to put it very simply, the consequence is that if there is no accountability for the human rights crimes and the generals who perpetuated the crimes in East Timor go on and, as they have done, to higher promotions, then that has really serious consequences to other self-determination struggles such as West Papua. I mean, the same generals are present, they are very much so, and for the chances of real democratic reform in Indonesia, so I – when you say, am I still engaged with East Timor, as far as that issue of accountability for the human rights crimes yes, I am, and there's a few other issues I still follow. I still follow the issue of East Timor's oil. That's an issue I feel very concerned about at the moment. It's, you know, one of the reasons why the West was so happy to go along with Indonesia's takeover of East Timor was because it gave Australia the opportunity to exploit the oil in the Timor Sea. They were able to strike a good bargain with Indonesia, and now that East Timor is free, Australia needs to go back and re-negotiate the sea bed border with a free East Timor, and they are refusing to do that, and I think it's just absolutely scandalous. They are still exploiting more than their fair share of the oil in the Timor Sea, and going on a boundary which is not what most countries work on. These days it's usually if there's a narrow gap then it's the half-way point, but the bargain that they negotiated with Indonesia was the end of their continental shelf, which greatly advantages Australia. They are able to draw oil from, I think it's the Lannin area [ph.] oil field on account of that boundary thing and there's - they're drawing, I think it's something like a million dollars a day worth, and this is – a figure, it was something like a billion dollars worth since 1999 that could well have gone, had there been a different negotiation, to East Timor. So you've got East Timor with huge, huge infrastructure problems, dreadful health problems, you know, just a huge struggle to get themselves established. If they had a fair share of the oil from a deal with "The Lucky Country" that would make a huge difference. It's just – it just seems mind-boggling to me that…see, Australia refuses to give in on that and they also refuse to take it to international arbitration under the United Nations Law of the Sea. It's just scandalous, I think, and it's not well known and it's an issue that New Zealand could take up with Australia. Some United States senators have spoken out about it and tried to persuade Australia to be a bit fairer on this, but so far nothing's happening. I mean, you read the most terrible things about health in East Timor. I read this most appalling story about a little girl of twelve, died from an infestation of worms. And, you know, that's the sort of thing that can be treated. These sorts of things: parasites, simple diarrhoea, malaria, all those kinds of things that can so

easily be treated. East Timor's struggling. That's how poor they still are, and there's the lucky country, it's one of the wealthiest countries in the world, getting more than its fair share. Not right.

SARAH: So you've still got some involvement with the East Timor issues—

MAIRE: Yes.

SARAH: Are there [sic] anything else that you're involved with in terms of peace or social justice?

MAIRE: Oh, well, I make my main concentration the Indonesia Human Rights Committee. At this stage, this group is a bit low-key, I guess. It's not – it hasn't built up to the sort of level of steam that we built up on the East Timor Independence Committee and there's – but there…some of the issues, like the issue of West Papua, I think, has a – strikes a real chord with New Zealanders because they can understand those issues because they are so jolly similar to the issues in East Timor, and because West Papua is a Pacific country, perhaps even more than East Timor in some ways. It's a Melanesian nation, close neighbour, and cultural similarities, in some ways, to other Pacific countries and Maori people in New Zealand so I think that's a struggle that I'd like to see better-known.

SARAH: Do you think that people's concerns for peace are heard today?

MAIRE: Well, it's obviously yes and no, isn't it? The current government is not listening to concerns about the war in Iraq and New Zealand's commitment to that, not even being totally open, I don't think, about the level of the commitment that we do have there. Certain things just leak out sometimes, and we have special forces there involved in ways that New Zealanders, if they were more aware of it, would probably not be happy about. On the other hand, just had this whole controversy about National and its anti-nuclear policy. It would be very difficult to change the anti-nuclear policy, I think, because it's bedded into the psyche of Kiwi people, I think, and that's sort of been handed down from generation to generation now. But I would - you know, there's certainly much more progress could be made – yeah, I disagree entirely with the commitment that our government makes to the so-called War on Terror. You know, the little slogan: "War is Terror" is the true one.

SARAH: What lessons have you learnt from your experiences in and involvement in peace campaigns?

MAIRE: Well, that movements can make a difference, I think, yeah. It can make a difference, you know, that people are not powerless. That's not to say it's easy but it is possible for people joining together to make a difference. Maybe that's something that…you know, I think that's the case everywhere but in New Zealand we've got a few advantages, perhaps, advantages in terms of our size and traditions, if you like, that we do have relatively easy access to our politicians and we do have a political process that we

can have an impact on. It doesn't always seem that way. I think perhaps, you know, you get a lot of cynicism. When I was involved in local body politics you certainly heard that cynicism that people feel no matter what they do the bastards are going to go on doing the same thing anyway, but I still do believe strongly that change is possible and people gathered together can make that difference.

SARAH: Have you - do you want to say anything about how your work in - as a local body politician connected with your work in – as part of the peace movement?

MAIRE: Well, yes, I had a term on the regional council when there was an opportunity to sort of push environmental concerns, which are all part of trying to create a livable future, aren't they, and I guess as a result of that I became a bit of a public transport enthusiast too, which is something I still feel strongly about and want to carry forward. Yeah, I – the local body politics is good value, it's a level of democracy that gets a bit overlooked, sometimes, I think, and perhaps we ought to make more use of than we do because it is the level of democracy that's most accessible to people, and it's been used not just…you know, people have used it in the past to promote broader issues than just the rates and rubbish and so forth. They've used it as a way of expressing their views about anti-nuclear concerns and very successfully so, and more recently anti-genetic engineering concerns too, I think, so yeah, so local body politics can be interesting and is very important.

SARAH: So where are you currently working at the moment or are you—

MAIRE: Okay, I work at Auckland Hospital. I'm a social worker with the elderly. I work in older people's health, which is working with people who are going through rehabilitation following illness or accident, and as a social worker the main task is to help people to make appropriate arrangements at the time for their discharge so it's helping them to put in place extra help at home and sometimes to arrange for residential care placement. I enjoy working with elderly people so it's a good area of social work because

older people sometimes have the best stories, and I enjoy the sort of multi-disciplinary, we call it, but that just means teamwork really, with…in that area of rehabilitation it's not so much the doctor deciding everything as everybody working together as a team and that's good fun on the whole. Far too much paperwork, though, like a lot of other jobs these days.

SARAH: And the other two days a week? Is it—

MAIRE: The other two days a week are for my other commitments and interests, which is quite a good way to be.

SARAH: Oh, well, thank you very much for talking with us.

MAIRE: Thank you.

(ends)