



Jim Chapple and his peace-peddling caravan in Dee Street yesterday.

Peace activist on mission

Jim Chapple is a man with a mission, armed with a caravan and a fistful of pamphlets.

The Dunedin-based peace activist is visiting Invercargill as part of a drive by the Anti-Bases Campaign to educate the public about the building of a satellite base at Waihopai, near Blenheim.

And if you thought spies and secret service men were strictly confined to "The Man From UNCLE," Mr Chapple's message is a real eye-opener.

The Anti-Bases Campaign maintains the satellite base under construction at Waihopai will be used to intercept all communications coming into New Zealand by satellite, routinely and illegally, Mr Chapple says.

It is being built, and will be manned by, the Government Communications Security Bureau, which deals with overseas intelligence.

"The level of secrecy is stratophenic — only the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition have been briefed about it, and it is quite possible they haven't been told everything," Mr Chapple said yesterday.

He praised the efforts of a group of concerned women who brought the base to the nation's attention when they were forcibly removed from earthworks machines at the site earlier this year.

Their camp has now been disbanded, but the Anti-Bases Campaign is determined to keep the profile high, with Mr Chapple's caravan travelling all over the South Island, and a planned tour of the North Island late next month.

Their basic argument is:

• The base's activities are totally unaccountable to the GCSB is accountable to

• The base is estimated to cost between \$100 million and \$200 million, "an exorbitant cost at a time when we have such pressing social needs."

• It is both immoral and illegal.

"The base is illegal on three counts — it goes against the United Nations Charter on Human Rights (which stipulates a right to private communications and legal protection against their invasion), against the International Telecommunications Agreement, which New Zealand has ratified, and against our own domestic laws," Mr Chapple said.

"And it is immoral because it's used against people; it's not to help people at all."

Public reactions, he said, had mostly been favourable.

"When you give people this basic information, they say, 'We don't want it, do we?' — although there were a few exceptions.

"In Gore, there was a man who came up and yelled, 'You're mad, you're all mad,' and then scuttled off round the corner like an ant," Mr Chapple laughed.

But his motive is serious.

"No MP, no prominent business person, no ordinary you and I can ever be sure their conversation is not going into the puddle of information the secret service is collecting, if this base goes ahead. The gear they've got now most people wouldn't believe existed."

Jim Chapple has been involved in the peace movement for 25 years and in that time he has seen some very real achievements.

This campaign will continue, he says, until the Waihopai base is closed.